



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07487972 1

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

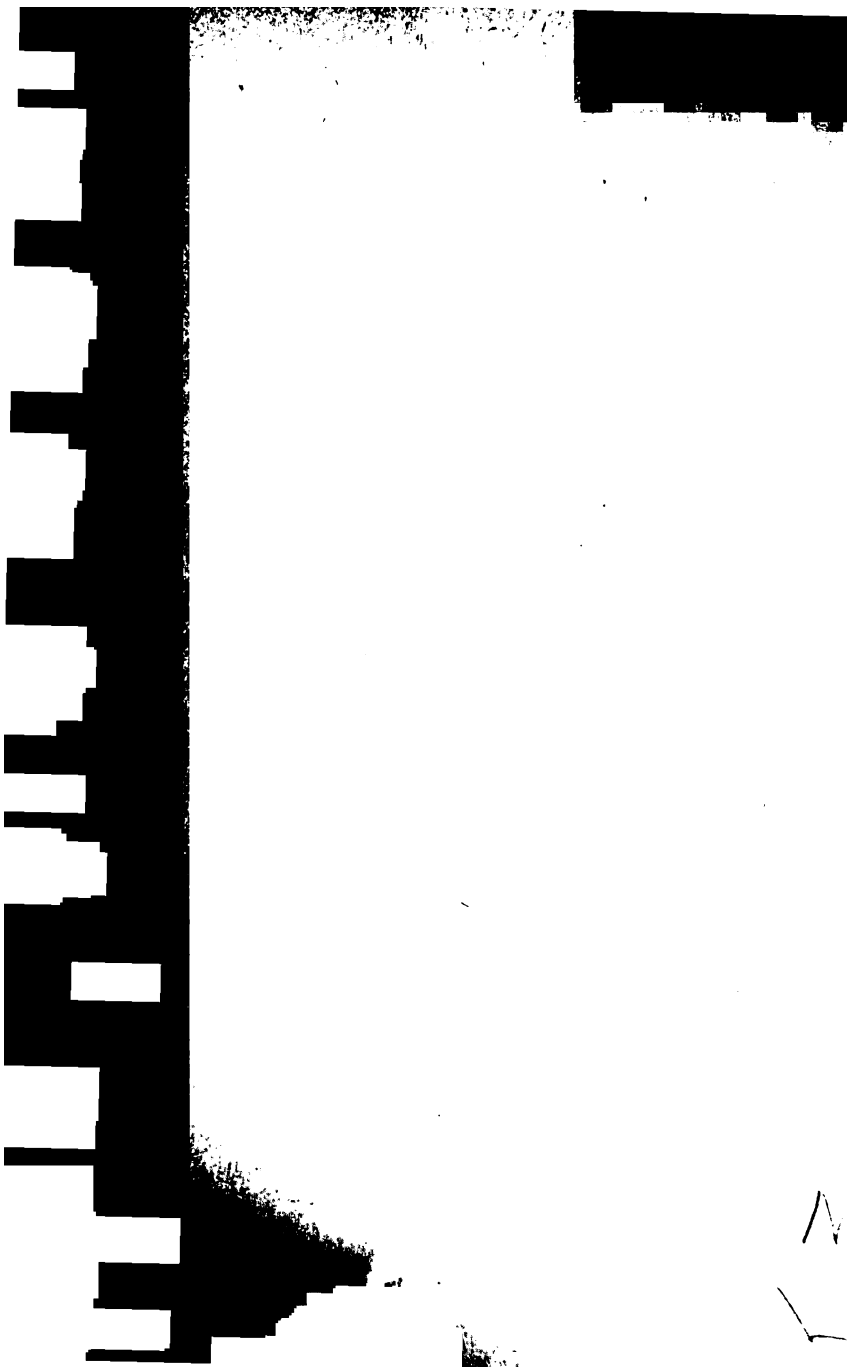
Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

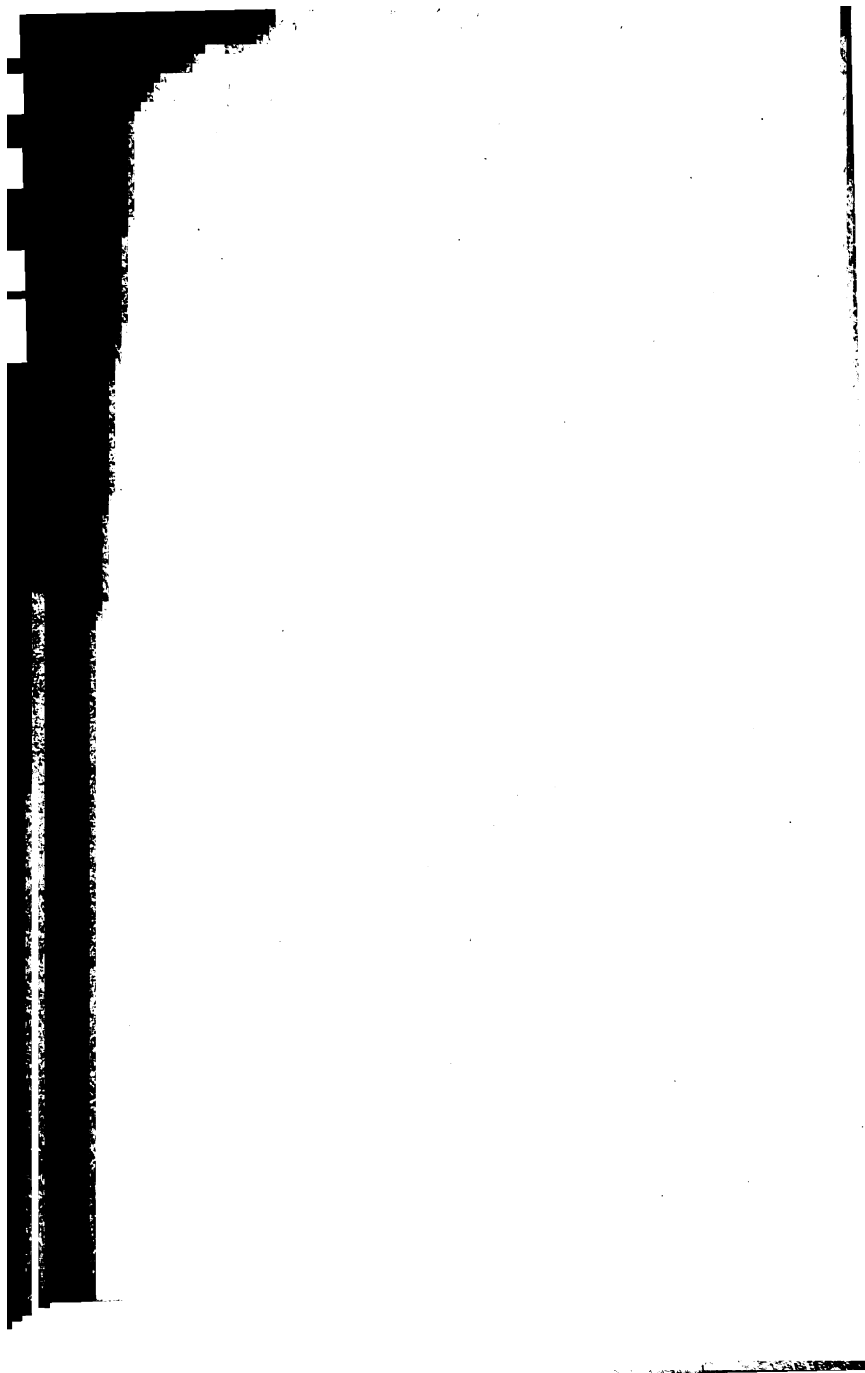
Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

Copyright, 1935, by American Medical Association. All rights reserved. Printed at the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

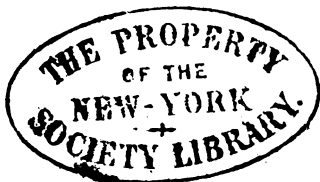




F -ib

SARAH: A SURVIVAL

A Novel



BY

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN

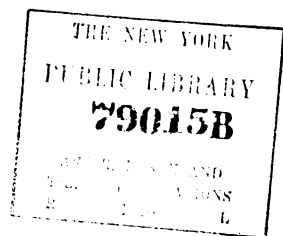


V.C.

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1894

G_o



TO
EMILY
THE STEADFAST STRENGTH OF WHOSE LIFE
IS MY BEST INSPIRATION

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
THE THORNBOROUGHS OF MEADS	1

PART II

THE HAYS OF BYRON VILLA	61
-----------------------------------	----

PART III

IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY	93
---------------------------------	----

PART IV

SARAH THORNBOROUGH GROWS UP	132
---------------------------------------	-----

PART V

THE HOME OF EDWARD HAY	187
----------------------------------	-----

PART VI

THE FOOLISHNESS OF SARAH	248
------------------------------------	-----

SARAH: A SURVIVAL

Part 1

THE THORNBOROUGHs OF MEADS

"I am not yet come to that degree of wisdom to think light of the sex of whom I have my life, since, if I be anything, I was to come to it, born of a woman, and nursed of a woman. . .

"And truly we men, and praisers of men, should remember, that if we have such excellencies, it is reason to think them excellent creatures of whom we are ; since a kite never brought forth a good flying hawk."

CHAPTER I

"CHILDREN are a great responsibility, Dan."

"They are, Rachel."

"Especially girls."

"Especially boys, Rachel."

"I fear they may be in mischief or danger even now."

"It is very likely."

"Shall we go and seek for them, Dan ?"

"I think it might be wise; there is much water in the pond, owing to these recent rains. I trust they may not have wandered into the top field."

"Little Sarah is often disobedient, Dan."

"And Gideon over-venturesome for his years. Come, Rachel, we will go up through the kitchen garden."

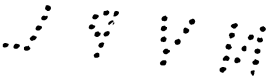
The speakers were a little elderly lady and a tall elderly gentleman; a glance told that they were brother and sister. They had the same amount of silver in their curls, the same

keen eyes and straight noses, the same benevolent expression and finely curved lips. But there was a twinkle of humor in the eyes of the brother, and there were lines of thoughtfulness on his brow, which were absent in the equally vigorous, but less clever face of the sister. All his movements, and the tones of his voice, were full of a leisurely indulgence, while hers were quick and decisive, as of one who rarely sees the need for changing her mind.

The Thornboroughs had for generations lived at Meads. They had been in the Church and in the army and in the navy. There had been among them eminent divines, generals, and admirals; also many worthy country gentlemen, who had taken wives from wealthy county families and lived useful and comfortable country lives at Meads.

Theirs was a Puritan family. Many a Mercy, Sarah, or Rebekah figured in the family tree, many a Matthew and Jonathan and Samuel. Their men had been for the most part reliable, unbending, unimaginative; their women strong, domestic, well favored. Here and there had been a departure, as in the case of wild Will Thornborough, who, generally drunk as a lord, married the lovely daughter of a travelling tinker, rode with her on Black Angel to the gates of Meads, which his father shut in his face, rode away cursing through Thornborough woods, and there shot his bride and himself. People did say it was all because Dorothy Howard had refused him, scared at his drinking habits, but, after three centuries, who shall say? Also there had been a Jasper Thornborough, a courteous gentleman of the road, and a lovely Diana Thornborough, who had left her stern husband to follow the fortunes of a gay young squire. Valiant and proud and impatient of restraint were all the Thornboroughs. "There has not been a tame man among us, nor an ugly woman," Dan Thornborough was often heard to say.

Dan, Jasper, Rachel, and Jael were the four children of the last owner of Meads. Dan, the eldest, had on the early



death of his father taken the management of the estate. Jasper entered the army, married the penniless daughter of a brother officer, went to India, and after some years died there a widower. He had sent Mabel, the elder of his two children, to his wife's family, and the younger, Sarah, to the old home to the charge of his brother and his unmarried sister Rachel. Jael Thornborough had been the beauty of the county. A fascinating, bewildering beauty, with wonderful dark eyes, straight brows, a figure like a tall, strong pine, and brilliant lips and cheeks. Dan and Rachel had a tolerably lively time of it so long as Jael remained at home, for her love affairs were many,—often tragic and always interesting,—and the brothers and sisters had no secrets. Beautiful, bewildering Jael was finally wooed and won by Sir Godolphin Leigh of Leigh Court, in the next county. They had three children, who were all carried off by a malignant fever. Then a boy was born, who was christened "Gideon Godolphin," after Jael's father and her husband, and when the boy was five years old his beautiful mother died. It was not long before Sir Godolphin Leigh married again, and Meads became as much Gideon's home as Leigh Court, for a new family began to spring up there, and his young step-mother recognized the claims the Thornboroughs had on the boy, and spared him and welcomed him with equal fervor. Thus it happened that the two little cousins, Gideon Leigh and Sarah Thornborough, were brought up together at Meads by their childless uncle and aunt.

Meads had been a much larger property than it was when Dan Thornborough's father inherited it. The old Thornborough woods with their fine timber had been, two generations back, much curtailed, and small farms had been sold. It now consisted of some seven thousand acres, and there was not an operation carried on on any portion of them which Dan Thornborough did not thoroughly understand himself, and over which he had not consulted with Jacob Frant.

The Frants had served the Thornboroughs for generations ; there had always been a Frant at the head of the stables, the garden, the kitchen, and many younger Frants as garden boys and house-servants. Mrs. Frant was at this time head in the kitchen ; her son, " Old George " (though he was still in the forties), was head in the stables ; " Young George," his son, watched with zealous care over the children's ponies ; and Susan, his daughter, was little Sarah's nurse. But it was " Mr. Frant," Mrs. Frant's brother, the head of the Frant family, as Dan was head of the Thornboroughs, to whom the whole of the serving establishment of Meads looked up with reverence. Everybody called him " Mr. Frant " ; only his master and mistress were allowed the familiarity of using his Christian name " Jacob." Jacob Frant was bailiff, as his father had been before him, and had been in his youth publicly horsewhipped by old Jonathan Thornborough, Dan's grandfather. It was at the annual fair, and young Jacob had been spied, by the eagle eye of old Jonathan, gambling and drinking in a booth. The master had just driven on to the field with his family and the Leighs and the Howards. His jovial, handsome face was lighted with a smile, but it clouded over as his glance recognized young Jacob Frant, and jumping from his seat, whip in hand, he strode into the booth, seized the lad by the collar, and then and there thrashed him. " You are the first Frant that has disgraced his father's name ! " he shouted ; " what do you mean by it ? " For a Thornborough to execute justice on a Frant was quite the natural order of things, and young Jacob, as he slunk home away from the enticing hilarities of the fair, cherished no feelings of rebellion against his master. The only thing that stung him, as he trudged along the hot road, was that Miss Rachel and Miss Jael should have witnessed his disgrace. He betook himself to the hay-loft and wept there. But toward night-fall, when the family had returned, two childish voices at the foot of the ladder cried, " Jacob, come down ; we know you are up there " ; and Jacob Frant stared down through the

trap-door to see his two little mistresses in their white muslin frocks eagerly looking up at him.

"Grandpa has forgiven you now, Jacob. What a dirty place you were in! Oh, we *were* so sorry, weren't we, Jael?"

The great boy slid down the ladder, and the two little girls lifted their clean sweet faces and kissed him with their red lips. Thus began and ended Jacob Frant's gambling days; he grew up and settled down and followed in his father's shoes as bailiff, as was right and meet for a Frant to do.

Sunday at Meads was kept by the present family exactly as their predecessors had kept it. The church was five miles away, and it was necessary to start betimes. The rule of the house was that the entire household attended morning service; the tradition being that no harm could come to a house while its owners were doing their duty. The old coach, only used on Sundays, came round punctually at ten o'clock; on to its roof scrambled, or decorously mounted, as many of the family and servants as there was room for, the rest packed inside. The reigning Thornborough always drove, the reigning Frant always brought away the key of the back premises. As they passed the lodge, the coach stopped to allow as many of its inmates as could be spared to mount also, and then the horses were whipped up and away at a rattling pace, to the old church with its galleries and three-decker.

The only exceptions to this rule were when there were Thornboroughs in the cradle too young to go, or Thornboroughs in the great dining-room arm-chair too old to go. Then a Frant stayed at home with them, rocked the former, or read aloud the Morning Service to the latter.

The Thornborough pew was square and large and private; when the red moreen curtains were drawn close along their brass rods nobody could see either in or out, unless a man of six feet four or five, as Jonathan Thornborough had been, happened to be there.

There was a fireplace in the pew, at which long-departed

Thornboroughs had dried their wet shoes and coats and pelisses, when in bygone days it had been considered a sin to make use on a Sabbath day of anything but their own sturdy legs, and both the men and the women had battled the whole five miles to service through rain, or wind, or snow. On hot days those curtains were very convenient ; many a Thornborough, both young and old, had slumbered peacefully behind them during the sermon, with their feet comfortably stretched out on the great red hassocks.

Piled up in the corner were large clasped Bibles and prayer- and hymn-books, many of them containing woodcuts and maps, and dedications and illuminated tail-pieces. There were books also which were not used in the service ; books brought there by the Thornboroughs whose names figured on the tablets on the wall above, or on the flat floor stones up the aisles, to while away the hours between morning and afternoon service. There were Quarles' "Emblems," "The Saint's Rest," "Meditations among the Tombs," Drelincourt on "Death," and on the shelf in the corner lay the old Dutch Bible, bound in faded calf, with its two great clasps of curious brasswork, its broad marker of frayed crimson ribbon, and its wonderful woodcuts. Its thin leaves, so thin that the letters on the reverse side seemed nearly printed through, and hindered the reading of the open page, were always placed open by the clerk at the first morning lesson, the red marker he put at the second. The clerk would as soon have omitted to do this as to have omitted doing the same by the Bible on the reading-desk.

The Thornborough pew was built against the reading-desk ; above it sat the clerk, in his walled-in box ; over his head the curate read the prayers ; and over him again, in the third story, the rector preached his fifty-minute sermon in black gown and bands. Over the rector's head was a canopy of oak, carved with pomegranates and ornamented with oak cherubs, who blew brazen trumpets to the four corners of the church.

The collections were made in a copper bowl fastened to the end of a long rod, which saved the congregation all trouble except that of dropping their money in. To see this rod thrust into their pew through the red curtains was one of the Sunday excitements to Gideon Leigh and Sarah Thornborough. Another excitement which Gideon could remember seeing once or twice was the Leigh Court equipage driving up to the church. Old Madam Leigh was Sir Godolphin's grandmother, a tiny figure well on in the eighties, her shrewd face peeping out of her lavender silk bonnet, overshadowed by its costly Brussels lace veil, and her feet encased in black satin shoes, which stepped daintily forth from under her lavender silk gown. Her great carriage was upholstered throughout with faded gray damask; her old coachman sat on his gray-fringed hammercloth, his ancient head carefully powdered, his solemn eyes fixed on his sleek gray horses; her two men-servants stood behind, holding on to the straps, their powdered hair and silken calves the envy of all the villagers. Madam Leigh had driven all her life in this pomp to her own church, and deserted it for the town only when the new rector had begun to preach in his surplice, which "Popish performance" a Leigh could by no means tolerate.

It was once when driving thus in state, accompanied by her grandson, that she had encountered the Thornborough coach tearing down the road, and driven, not by Jonathan Thornborough, as she was accustomed to see, but by his daring, brilliant granddaughter Jael, whose dark curls and plumed hat were waving in the rush of wind as she urged the horses on with wild speed. The loaded coach swayed in its headlong course, the steady old Leigh Court chariot rumbled aside, as Jael's laughing eyes flashed into Godolphin Leigh's, and his heart bounded to meet her, while the two staid men-servants, standing up behind, privately grinned their admiration of the coach and its dazzling driver.

All this was over now. Madam Leigh and her old coachman had both gone to their fathers, the damask-lined chariot

was kept in state as a thing of the past, Sir Godolphin Leigh walked soberly the few yards into his own church, and the Thornborough coach was as soberly driven by Dan Thornborough, with only his sister Rachel beside him, and comparatively few Frants behind and inside.

But now children had come once more to clamber up on to its roof, and to enliven the too quiet drive with their dangerous pranks and incessant talk. For Gideon and Sarah bid fair to revive once more the exciting days of Jael and old Jonathan.

Gideon Leigh was acquainted with the top of the coach long before his cousin, Sarah Thornborough, came to share its joys with him. Many a long Sunday morning had the boy sat in the corner of the great pew and amused himself by turning over the books, while his Aunt Rachel sat bolt upright gazing at the preacher, and his Uncle Dan dozed, or made notes with a view to controverting uncertain points in the sermon the next time he and the rector met.

It was in the summer that Uncle Dan dozed, and in the winter that he made notes ; but in any case he never interfered with the little boy sitting so still on the red hassock beside him, and apparently deep in "Olney Hymns," or "The Compleat Angler." Uncle Dan chuckled to himself. Did he not know those books well ? Had they not served to break the monotony of the long service in his own boyhood, when his father had punished even a stifled yawn or a momentary closed eye ?

And now his shrewd eyes twinkled with delight whenever they rested on Gideon Leigh, his nephew, also poring over them.

"The Compleat Angler's " binding was worn and scratched, there were flies pressed between its leaves, and on its stained first page was written in faded ink : "This is my book, Jasper Thornborough, 1715." Dan's brother had been named after this Jasper. How had it got to church ? The sober binding was very like all the other devotional books.

Had it arrived by accident in the pew, or had it been brought by that great angler Jasper Thornborough, who could not resist reading, even in church, that "'Tis noted that the Tench and Eel love mud, and the Carp loves gravelly ground, and in the hot months to feed on grass"?

At any rate, there it had lain for the past hundred years, and with it lay now "Olney Hymns, in Three Books," 1812. Eagerly little Gideon would turn to the end of this last, where "The Kite; or, Pride Must Have a Fall," "The Spider and Toad," offered their fascinations. The child knew them all by heart. The words :

" See how yon crowds of gazing people
Admire my flight above the steeple,"

always got mixed up in his mind with the hymns when they were given out, except on the rare and delightful occasions when the hymn about "Gideon" was sung—Gideon, who was the hero of his young mind.

" Who ordered Gideon forth
To storm the invaders' camp
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp.
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown."

Gideon Leigh meant to be a soldier when he grew up. He told his uncle so one hot Sunday afternoon, when he was trotting beside him on the quiet stroll to visit the pigs and the chickens and the young turkeys, and Uncle Dan remembered that the "Gideon hymn," as his nephew called it, had been sung at morning service. For the most part the solitary child kept his ideas to himself; he and Uncle Dan understood each other without many words; but when he heard that his little cousin was coming to live at Meads one of his first thoughts was, "I shall tell Sarah I am going to be a soldier like Uncle Jasper, her father, was."

What an excitement prevailed in the household when the week after the child's arrival Miss Thornborough decided that her niece was to go to church! Little Sarah had not shown such signs of docility as to allow the decision to be heard by the household with entire satisfaction. She was a fearless, merry child, and had already burst into silvery laughter in the middle of morning prayers, trotted about the room when there were visitors and made friends with them all, torn off the black ribbon with which Susan Frant had tied her hair, and demanded "a nice red one, like papa let me wear."

On this Sabbath, owing to Gideon's exertions to amuse her all the way to church, she behaved rationally till the red-shrouded pew was reached, when she proceeded to draw a dilapidated negro doll from her small pocket, and announced to Gideon, "*Now*, we can play dolls in this nice dolls' house."

In vain Aunt Rachel exhibited the attractions of a new gilt-edged prayer-book; in vain Uncle Dan lifted her up on to the seat beside him, and let her look out between the moreen curtains at the assembling congregation. She was quiet for a time, but at last slid down, clutching Uncle Dan's legs, clothed in dazzling duck, reached a high red hassock, and cried fervently, "Oh, Gideon, help me to put Queen Victoria to bed!"

The boy looked askance at his uncle and aunt; the rector's voice was just beginning, "When the wicked man," the congregation had risen; it was an awful moment; suppose that child's clear voice should suddenly make further revelations about "Queen Victoria." Uncle Dan's lips were twitching; Aunt Rachel looked in despair. Sarah, all unconscious, began crooning a lullaby to herself, rocking vehemently the extremely small doll, and showing all her pearly teeth as she cheerfully smiled up in Uncle Dan's face. The crooning lullaby grew louder; the clerk stared severely down into the pew. Gideon waited no longer, but, dragging his hassock up to his cousin, he reached out a hand for

"Olney Hymns" and "The Compleat Angler," and soon the two small heads were close together; the low murmuring which followed might easily be mistaken for devout praying, and Aunt Rachel breathed again. She knew nothing about those two books; she had never doubted that they were prayer- or hymn-books, and knelt rejoicing in the power of the Spirit that could so work on infant minds as to endow the long prayers with interest, even for a baby like Sarah.

Never had Gideon spent such a frivolous Sunday morning.

The boy had managed to make Sarah understand that no talking, or at any rate only whispers, was the order of the day, and that out of that "dolls' house" they could not go till Uncle Dan might choose to turn the brass button on its drab-painted door and march out himself.

Up and down she trotted, the hassocks now here, now there. "Queen Victoria," wrapped tight in her own tiny pocket-handkerchief, was put to sleep alternately inside the crown of Uncle Dan's hat and on the silk train of Aunt Rachel's dress, where it rested on the floor. Then she climbed up on the seat again, and was quiet so long during the first lesson that Gideon got up beside her to see what she was looking at between the curtains.

"Look," she whispered anxiously. "He's asleep, and his head is shining, and there's a large wasp."

Gideon dragged her down from the contemplation of the bald-headed gentleman, and closed the curtains. Looking round in search of fresh distraction she caught sight of Uncle Dan's seals, which hung at his old-fashioned watch chain.

Without more ado she clambered on to his knee, and he was guilty of pushing aside the old Dutch Bible and amusing his niece till the reading of the lesson was over. Tired out at last, she lay down on the floor, and, leaning her head against Gideon as he sat sleepily on a hassock, she went fast asleep. Seeing his nephew presently begin to nod, Uncle Dan cautiously drew the hassock near enough for the boy to lean against him, and the children slept tranquilly through the

rest of the service. But Uncle Dan presented the remarkable spectacle of sitting down all through the hymns and the final blessing for the first time in his life, in spite of a severe whisper from his sister that "It will not do to begin by letting that child rule us ; better wake them up. Gideon has never gone to sleep in church before."

Her brother waved his hand deprecatingly, and whispered back again, "Accept the omen ; the boy has found his fate, and the child will rule us all."

He was right. Aunt, uncle, cousin, and the entire Frant clan fell under her baby fascinations, and the sway of Sarah Thornborough lasted on at Meads for many a long year after its beginning in the old red-curtained pew.

After that, two years glided peacefully by. The useful monotonous days were only broken by Sarah's vagaries, or by Gideon's visits to Leigh Court, whence he always returned with more and more passionate fondness for Meads.

It was on a spring Sunday afternoon, Gideon's tenth birthday, little Sarah being seven, that their uncle and aunt held the conversation about them with which these pages open. Terrible experiences they had lately had: Gideon had nearly cut his leg off with a scythe, and Sarah had been hardly rescued from an open cistern. Never were two more daring children. The lives of the Frants were a burden to them by reason of the ceaseless and unlooked-for perils into which the two combined to place themselves. So it was with an anxious sigh that Aunt Rachel followed her brother in search of them, up through the kitchen garden and into the top field where the great barn stood.

Sunday afternoon calm reigned around them ; across the orchard Jacob Frant was leisurely strolling with his pipe and his dogs ; leaning over the pigsty wall Young George was discernible, gossiping in company with another youth ; to the right, in the meadow, ruminating peacefully, were Dan Thornborough's choice Alderneys ; further on the long grass swayed gently in the breeze, abiding the haying time. But

there was no sound of child's laughter to be heard, no sturdy children's figures to be seen.

"They have done wrong to stray away," remarked Aunt Rachel. "I set Gideon the seventy-fifth Psalm to learn before tea, and he was to teach little Sarah :

" ' Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild.' "

I fear he has forgotten to do so, for they were not in the school-room as I passed."

"Is the seventy-fifth Psalm a very long one?" asked her brother.

"It is but ten verses—as many as his years. He has been boastful of late before Young George, therefore I laid special stress upon the words 'Speak not with a stiff neck. God is the Judge : He putteth down one, and setteth up another.' "

"I wonder if little Sarah understands that hymn? I remember learning it when I was a lad, 'Make me teachable and mild.' Bless me, I'm neither one nor the other, even after all these years."

"I am sure, Dan, you never had a froward heart," his sister indignantly replied. "That child is very wayward ; the discipline of learning is good for her, though, to be sure, it is little discipline, for she learns without any trouble, and Gideon has a rare gift for teaching."

Her brother did not answer. His eyes were fixed upon a small black object on the loose hay at the foot of one of the stacks they were approaching. His sister's eyes followed his.

"It is Jael's old school Bible !" she cried. "I gave it to Gideon to learn out of ; they cannot be far off."

Dan Thornborough stood still and shouted. There was no answer. His sister picked up the little worn Bible. A folded piece of paper kept the place of the seventy-fifth Psalm ; on it was inscribed, in Gideon's large childish hand, the verse of the hymn he had been set to teach Sarah.

"Good boy, he has not then been disobedient, I trust," remarked his aunt with satisfaction.

Uncle Dan shouted again.

"We had better return to the house," he said finally.

They did so, approaching it from the opposite side they had started from. They were too anxious to exchange any remarks, only, as they passed the pigsty, Young George was ordered to come and help look for the children. On the way they were joined by Jacob Frant and a garden-boy. The procession came round to the ivy-covered side of the house.

"Who has left that ladder there?" demanded Dan Thornborough sharply, as he hurried on ahead; but none of the party knew.

High up on the topmost rung of the ladder, where it ended in the ivy-covered gables, Gideon Leigh was discernible, holding on with one hand, while the other was stretched out toward something he was trying to reach. On the next rung below him stood Sarah, clutching with both fat hands the sides of the ladder, while the breeze blew her white pinafore and her yellow curls out behind her into space. Aunt Rachel uttered an exclamation of horror, and cried:

"Birds'-nesting on the Sabbath, naughty children!"

Uncle Dan put his hand on her arm.

"Hush!" he said; "do not speak or we shall startle them, and they may lose their balance."

Aunt Rachel grew white, but she repressed her inclination to call out. Jacob Frant's face wore a grim smile as he turned to Young George and remarked:

"That boy is his mother all over again, and the little one won't be behind him; the old Thornborough blood, it does one good to see it."

"Got any more, Gideon?" they heard Sarah's clear little voice ask.

"Lots and lots. Hold on tight, Sarah, with one hand, and hold out your pinafore to me, and I'll lay them in."

Uncle and aunt closed their eyes. "Lord, bring these

dear little ones down in safety ! " Aunt Rachel was heard to murmur. Cautiously the boy stooped backward and put something into the pinafore. Several times he repeated the action, then the anxious watchers below heard him say :

" Now, go down three steps slowly, and don't joggle your pinafore, or you'll break them. I see another nest just below you."

Slowly the fat bare legs descended. Aunt Rachel gasped :

" She has got on her new strap shoes, and they are specially slippery."

" Hush ! " whispered Uncle Dan again, but his own face was stern with anxiety.

" I see three more. Are you tired, Sarah ? "

" No, I aren't tired ezackly, but the eggs is all running into each other."

" We'll go down and empty your pinny, and come up again ; go slowly, Sarah. I'll just stop and look in this last one."

Aunt Rachel watched the slow descent in an agony of impatience.

Neither of the children had perceived that they were being observed. As Sarah neared the earth they heard her saying to herself :

" Little blue eggs, Gideon will blow them ; I shall have a necklace for me, and one for Queen Victoria. Little blue eggs all for me and Gideon."

The men were smiling at the child's unconscious face as she kept stopping now to peep into her pinafore, now to look up at Gideon, who was beginning his own descent. As soon as she came within reach, Aunt Rachel darted forward, lifted her off the ladder, set her down sharply on the ground, and relieved her agony of apprehension by dealing a smart smack on her niece's bare neck. The startled child let fall the end of her pinafore, and the treasured blue eggs fell into a smashed heap on the ground. Gideon jumped to earth and faced his aunt.

"What do you slap her for?" he cried.

Sarah slipped her hand into his, but made no sign of anger or pain. Uncle Dan interposed.

"Children, you have broken the Sabbath day, frightened us very much, and robbed the happy birds of their eggs," he said gravely.

"Oh, no, please," the boy answered eagerly. "We leave one in every nest, so as the mother bird won't mind. And I don't see why you were frightened, *we* weren't. And you ought to slap me too, Aunt Rachel."

"You might have both been killed," she remonstrated severely.

"Being killed would be *much* better than breaking the little blue eggs," bewailed Sarah.

Finding the terrors of death of no avail, Aunt Rachel urged :

"But what would Uncle Dan and I do without you, children? Do not ever do it again. Promise."

But the culprits stood stubbornly hand in hand, and promised nothing.

Uncle Dan surveyed them. He was very susceptible to beauty in any form. It was an ever-increasing delight to him to see what fine and beautiful children these last Thornboroughs were. His sister would only allow that they were "well enough ; beauty was but skin deep." But now it seemed to him that Jasper and Jael stood before him once more ; and the years rolled back, and he himself was one of the daring trio who had crawled out through an attic window and all round the roof of Meads one moonlit night. How well he recalled the thrashing their father had given him and Jasper, and Jael's wailing over the page of Romaine on "Faith," to learn which had been her share of punishment ! And here stood their children before him, culprits awaiting doom, and looking upon him, perchance, as he remembered he and Jasper had looked upon their father—a tiresome old man not to understand the fun of an adventure, and a cruel man to

thrash them for a mere joke. Uncle Dan sighed and blew his nose violently. Then he held out a hand to each. "Let us go in to tea," he said gravely. They loosed each other's hands and came to him.

"Have that ladder removed at once, Jacob ; do not wait till to-morrow."

"Ay," returned Jacob Frant, as he watched his master and the children along the carriage-drive.

Miss Thornborough lingered a moment.

"Your master is too good for this world, Jacob. They ought to have been punished."

Jacob Frant looked at the still youthful face of his mistress.

"Do you mind the fair, forty-five years ago ? You and Miss Jael wore white frocks then, like Sarah. You came and fetched me out of the hay-loft."

His sunburnt face was covered with a broad smile. Miss Thornborough smiled also.

"Spare the rod and spoil the child.' You had had your punishment, remember, Jacob. The tree cannot be bent when it is old. I trust that my blow may be blessed to little Sarah ?"

"Maybe," he replied. "I, like you, am over-ready with my hand in my own household, but 'he that is soon angry dealeth foolishly.'"

"And 'he that hateth reproof shall die,' Jacob. No, Gideon has his mother's sweet nature, though he be head-strong ; but little Sarah has, I fear, much to learn yet—she has a stubborn will."

Meanwhile uncle, nephew, and niece pursued their way indoors, through the cool stone hall, where the antlers and horns hung, and the great white owl and the spoonbill and the wood-pigeon looked stupidly down from their cases. They entered the library, where, sinking into his arm-chair, Dan Thornborough asked :

"Which of you two children intends to speak first ?"

Then, to his surprise, his niece flung herself into his arms in torrents of tears, wailing out :

"Oh, it was so nice up there, and I hate her for slapping me. I wish she was dead. I wish they was all dead except you and Gideon and me."

Uncle Dan had no arguments; he had not the least idea what to do. Gideon stood staring, with his hands behind him.

"She's quite right—it *was* nice up there. Couldn't you punish me, uncle, without making me promise? Then we might go up again. I think you would like it too, if you could get so high."

Uncle Dan wiped his niece's sniffing little nose and his own rumpled shirt-front, and while her sobs grew fewer, he remarked as he smoothed her yellow hair:

"Get so high? Bless me, my boy, do you suppose there is a brick or a slate on the whole of the Meads estate that I don't know? One would suppose that Meads was built for you and Sarah. Sarah's father and I—ay, and your mother too—have scrambled over the roof many a time. But do not go on the Sabbath, and do not take Sarah with you till she is bigger."

"Then I may go when I like?" cried the boy eagerly.

"Yes; I went when I liked."

"I expect you were an awful swell at climbing, Uncle Dan; Jacob says you were. I should like to grow up like you, I think," remarked Gideon admiringly.

"I'm only seven. Oh, when may I go with Gideon?" besought Sarah, with her arm round her uncle's neck.

"Sarah, do you know why your aunt slapped you?" he began gravely. "She was afraid you might fall right down off that ladder, and then she would have lost her little niece. She slapped you because you frightened her so. You should be sorry, not hate her."

"Well, I'll say my hymn to her at tea. Will that do?" asked Sarah reluctantly.

"Yes, that will do."

"Oh, I hope she won't ask me to say 'The Good Girl.'"

"What is that?" said bewildered Uncle Dan.

"You tell him ; I forget," commanded the child, pushing Gideon's arm.

"It's Miss Lydia Banks," explained Gideon. "Sarah doesn't like it, no more do I. The hymns are much nicer. I hate Miss Lydia Banks. She was a nasty little thing. I'm glad Sarah isn't like her."

"Well, tell me about it. Let me hear," said his uncle.

Then Gideon repeated in a singsong voice, which made his uncle chuckle :

" 'Miss Lydia Banks, though very young,
Will never do what's rude or wrong ;
When spoken to she always tries
To give the most polite replies.

" 'Observing what at school she's taught,
She turns her toes as children ought ;
And when returned at night from school,
She never lolls on chair or stool.

" 'Some children, when they write, we know,
Their ink about them heedless throw ;
But she, though young, has learned to think
That clothes look spoil'd with spots of ink.

" 'Perhaps some little girl may ask,
If Lydia always learns her task ;
With pleasure I can answer this,
Because with truth I answer "yes."'

'There, aren't hymns *much* better?' demanded Gideon triumphantly.

"Yes," said Uncle Dan with his whimsical smile. "Yes ; I can't say I admire the poem much."

"There's Miss Lucy," said Sarah, sniffing between each line. "Listen :

" 'Miss Lucy was a charming child,
She never said "I won't !"
If little Dick her playthings spoil'd,
She said "Pray, Dicky, don't."'

Gideon began eagerly to enlighten his uncle with more information :

"Of course he wasn't likely to stop spoiling them for *that*, was he, Uncle Dan? Then there's Sammy Smith :

" 'Sammy Smith would drink and eat
From morning unto night ;
He fill'd his mouth so full of meat,
It was a shameful sight.'

Aunt Rachel would have sent him to bed. I wonder where he got the food? Mrs. Frant wouldn't have given it to him, horrid pig ! "

By this time Sarah's tears were dried, and she clamored for "a Sunday story."

"This is my birthday," cried Gideon suddenly. "Tell us who was Gideon besides grandpapa. I've forgotten."

So Dan Thornborough proceeded to relate the history of that other Gideon who was not "grandpapa," partly in his own words, partly in the Bible words, while his listeners stared in his face with rapt attention.

"Stop a minute ; say that again, uncle," interrupted his nephew.

" 'The Lord be with thee, thou mighty man of valor,' " repeated Uncle Dan patiently and impressively.

"Then he *was* going to be a soldier? I thought he was. Go on, uncle."

But when Dan Thornborough came to the words, "As thou art, so were they, each one resembled the children of a king," he paused.

Gideon had got up from the floor where he had been sprawling on his face, his chin supported in his two hands, and now stood erect before his uncle, his dark eyes flashing, his brown curls tossed over his forehead, his scarlet lips apart ; one sunburnt little fist grasped the pillar of a carved whatnot, with the other he wielded his uncle's long-ruler ; his upright figure was full of command and enthusiasm. "Each

one resembled the children of a king," thought Dan Thornborough proudly. But then it suddenly flashed across him: "The lad must not be a soldier, or who will rule Meads when I am gone?"

"Go on, uncle, dear," insisted Sarah, pulling at his coat.

"'And the country was in quietness forty years all the days of Gideon.' And that was quite the nicest time they had," finished up Uncle Dan quickly.

"Ah!" cried his nephew, bringing down the ruler with a bang upon the leather seat of the chair near him. "Ah, I dare say it was, *after* the fighting."

"My lad, you will have to manage Meads when I am gone, you know."

"Where are you going?" cried the boy.

"When I am dead and gone, lad."

"What's that?" demanded Sarah.

"I'm going to be a soldier," persisted Gideon. "You know I am, uncle."

"I can take care of Meads, Uncle Dan," announced Sarah.

"Ah, my pink and white sugar-plum, if you take care of Meads, who is going to take care of you?"

"I myself, my own self, I can do it all," insisted the child, wriggling off her uncle's knees and again pulling his coat gently. "Say I can. Say I may."

"Yes, and then when I come back I can help her, like the forty years' rest," cried Gideon.

"Here comes Susan to brush your hair for tea," answered Uncle Dan, with a sense of relief.

And Sarah was borne off, confidentially assuring Susan that she would take care of them all when Uncle Dan and Aunt Rachel were gone away, and Gideon was fighting with lamps and pitchers.

That Sabbath evening, when his household was assembled for evening prayer, and Dan Thornborough, as was his custom, read, instead of a sermon, passages from the writings of some divine, he chose "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," by

Richard Baxter. He sat at one end of the long dining-table, his books before him, Aunt Rachel in the red leather arm-chair behind. Gideon and Sarah, on two small chairs on either side of their uncle, stared with the solemn, unabashed stare of childhood at the long row of servants seated opposite to them on the green baize-covered forms which the men brought in for the maids and for themselves.

Aunt Rachel had helped the children to such a plentiful supply of cake and cream at teatime that their small minds felt quite relieved from their feeling of disgrace, and a pleasant sense of forgiveness of sins pervaded them, and made them resolve to reward her by keeping awake all through prayers, instead of dropping asleep as they often did. Perhaps this was the reason why, afterward, Gideon Leigh often recollected with such a sense of peace that particular Sabbath evening, and why Sarah Thornborough, long years after, when her splendid youth, with its disdain of all control, was over, could never see "The Saints' Rest" without tears in her eyes.

There was only just light enough for Dan Thornborough to read by. The sky glowed golden behind the dark trees ; a bat flapped in and out the ivy on the house. The gentle splash of the water falling from the basins of the fountain and the warbling of a benighted thrush mingled with the finely modulated tones of Dan Thornborough's voice as he read :

"'Thou camest to spy out the land of promise ; go not back without one cluster of grapes, to show thy brethren for their encouragement. Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine, by the gladness of thy heart—that thou hast fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of thy disposition and the sweetness of thy conversation.'"

And "the land of promise" brought a vision of happiness to each, though it meant something different to each of his listeners. To Gideon and Sarah the "land of promise" was the top field, where they had every intention of trying bare-

backed the new pony on the morrow, when Young George should be out of the way. Aunt Rachel's thoughts travelled back to the early grave of a certain Leigh, whose wife she might otherwise have been; and Susan Frant's thoughts travelled forward to one of the gardeners who had "spoken" to her that afternoon. None of them would ever willingly have missed those Sabbath evening services, for, as Mrs. Frant frequently declared as she presided over the servants' supper-table, "It's like going into the promised land to hear the master read and to see his face."

"Ay," Jacob Frant would reply. "He is not one to 'spare at the spigot and let out at the bung-hole.' He is diligent to know the state of his flocks; he looks well to his herds. 'He that watereth shall be watered also himself.' But there will be none to come after him except Sarah. 'Tis a pity she is a lass; a man-child would have been better. 'Unlucky is the house where the hen crows.'"

CHAPTER II

WHEN Gideon Leigh was fifteen his father and his uncle sent him to school. It came about on this wise.

Sir Godolphin Leigh, or "Uncle Dol," as his nephews and nieces always called him, rode over one winter day to have lunch with his brother-in-law, and to discuss the propriety of selling a house in the town, a small windfall left by a lately deceased relative to Gideon.

Uncle Dol was stout, and his laugh was loud and jolly. He had a habit, when thinking, of walking up and down, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and of saying "Eh?" very sharply if he were interrupted. He had a great belief in his brother-in-law, though the two men were so different. Dan Thornborough was a Tory, and was a man of few words; Sir Godolphin Leigh was a Whig, and voluble. Dan had kept up the excellent Thornborough library, was something of a classical scholar himself—knew the notes of many a singing bird, the history of the caddis-worms in the brook, and the haunts of the owl and the woodpecker. Sir Godolphin knew nothing about the few books at Leigh Court, and never bought one; was too impatient to watch either bird or animal, and prided himself upon knowing no language but his own. His horses and his dogs were his hobby; and even now, as he paced the hard gravel path, he was followed by an Ayrdale and a couple of Basset hounds. Both men wore gaiters and rough overcoats, but Dan Thornborough adhered to a stick-up collar and black silk scarf, tied in a bow in front, as in his father's day, while Sir Godolphin wore a modern stock and pin. Dan Thornborough's face was guiltless of all hair, save a small white whisker; Sir Godolphin wore a reddish beard, now turning gray, so his rather clumsy mouth and

jaw were hidden ; while his brother-in-law's fine sensitive lips and strong chin were exposed.

Now, while they stopped for a moment at the iron gate leading out on to the frozen cart track, Uncle Dan's keen eyes fell upon the figures of a tall boy and a girl slowly wending their way along it toward the iron gate. Uncle Dol's less long sight did not distinguish who they were.

"Well, that's settled. Now for some lunch before my ride back !" he cried jovially.

"Stop a bit, Dol," said Uncle Dan in a puzzled voice; "here come the children, and there seems to me to be something the matter."

Much the matter, apparently, for a more battered and deplorable boy and girl the two gentlemen had surely never beheld.

They came wearily forward. Gideon's face was covered with blood, one eye was shut up, his thick hair hung over his white face ; he was in his shirt sleeves, which hung on him in ribbons, one arm hung listlessly at his side, the other was laid round his cousin's neck ; upon her his whole weight seemed to rest as she dragged him onward. Sarah's clothes were covered with dust, her hair hung over her face in straw-colored, tangled curls ; she carried Gideon's jacket over her arm, and under it a crushed mass which seemed to be their two dusty, torn hats. Great scratches, as from angry fingers, adorned her cheeks, but her eyes were flashing, her small nostrils quivering, as her eager voice made itself heard in hurried gasps :

"Oh, Uncle Dan ! Gideon's fought ever such a big man. And the girl scratched me, because I wouldn't let her go at Gideon. Oh, he was making the girl carry a sack of coals, and she was crying, and so Gideon fought him, and when she saw him go down she was *ever* so angry."

"God bless my soul !" shouted Uncle Dol, roaring with laughter.

Uncle Dan opened the iron gate for the dragged pair.

"He went down such a whack," observed Gideon faintly, as they slowly came through it.

"Bravo, my boy," cried his father, slapping him on the back ; "and well done, Sally, to stand by and see fair play ; it wasn't easy, judging by your face."

"She said I was a devil, and then she scratched me," announced his niece calmly. "I didn't care so long as I could keep her off Gideon. Oh, he was twice as big as us, Uncle Dan. Are you angry with us?" added the child, observing her uncle's face.

"No. But go in by the back door, you are enough to frighten your aunt, and get Mrs. Frant to doctor Gideon at once."

They began to obey, but before they had gone many yards Gideon swayed and fell to the ground, dragging Sarah with him.

"Eh, what, is the boy down?" cried his father, as Dan Thornborough went after them and lifted Gideon up.

"Here, Dol, lend a hand; the lad is played out, we must carry him in."

"Down, you brutes!" cried Sir Godolphin jovially, as his dogs leaped around, adding to the excitement. "Here, Sally, carry our sticks, and run on and tell them we are coming."

Later on, during lunch, when Sarah had been sent to carry oranges to her hero, Dan Thornborough, who had spoken little during the meal, said suddenly :

"Dol, we must send Gideon to school."

"My dear Dan, what should we do without him?" cried Aunt Rachel, setting down her wineglass in astonishment, without drinking.

"Eh? What, Dan? Send the boy to school? Why, God bless me, I thought you had taught him all you know by this time. And as for pluck, he has got pluck enough, surely?"

Dan Thornborough smiled, and cracked a walnut.

"Yes, he is plucky enough. Rather an inglorious war,

though. That is the sixth row he has been in since mid-summer. I begin to think he is aggressive."

"You mean a Leigh is a Leigh, and a Thornborough a Thornborough, all about here. No one of his own standing to give him a thrashing, eh?"

"Something of the sort," assented the other, peeling his walnut thoughtfully.

"Well, I am sure," observed Aunt Rachel, "it was very nice and brave of Gideon to take the part of that poor girl, but I confess I do not think it is good for Sarah to hear such bad language."

Uncle Dol burst out laughing. "What a little dare-devil she looked! Nothing will tame Sally. I've called Moll's" (Mary was the name of his second wife) "new chestnut after her, 'Sally the Dare-devil.'"

"Oh, Dol, I hope you will not talk so before the child. Sarah is over-difficult of control already."

"The child is only brave and strong," said Uncle Dan quietly.

"Well, about this school business. What do I know about such things? Come in, Sally, and shut the door. Now stand straight here before me and tell me if you think Gideon ought to go to school."

"No," said the child promptly; "we can't spare him."

"But he is growing up an ignorant lout, you see, Sally."

"Could I go with him, please?"

"No, you can't; you must stay at home here, and Aunt Rachel will show you how to darn stockings," answered Uncle Dol teasingly.

"I know how already," said Sarah with scorn. "What is a lout, please, Uncle Dan?"

Dan Thornborough surveyed his niece, and handed her half his peeled walnut.

"The catechism is your uncle's, Sarah. Go on answering him."

Instantly she turned again to Sir Godolphin.

"Well, go on asking, then," she ordered.

"What are Gideon's accomplishments?" began Uncle Dol, leaning one arm over the back of his chair and holding with his other hand the great silver mug which contained the remainder of his ale.

Rapidly his niece summed up her cousin's performances.

"Oh, he can nearly shear a sheep, and he can ride Uncle Dan's biggest horse, and on Sunday he drove them to church. Uncle Dan let him. And he mended our school-room table, and Jacob says he can milk the cows quite well, and he took four swarms of bees his very own self this year, and never got stung, and I think that's all."

"And I suppose he can't read or write. Pray, how do you suppose he is to get a living, if a great fire came and burnt up Meads and Leigh Court, and there were no more cows to milk, or bees to swarm, or coaches to drive? Eh, child?"

"Fires don't burn like *that*," declared Sarah, with the disdain of those who feel that their age unfortunately enables other people to treat them as idiots. "Besides, you *know* he can read and write, and do Jacob's accounts, and my French exercises; and we both know 'Lycidas' by heart, and all the meanings, too. And he knows ever so much Latin. All about:

" 'Meanwhile Æneas steadfastly held in a middle course with his fleet,
And cut the black waves with the north wind,
Looking back on the ramparts lighted up by the flames of unhappy
Elissa.' "

That was Dido, you know. She was the queen. I can't remember any more without the book. Uncle Dan said it wasn't a bad translation of ours to begin with. What do you think?"

"I don't think anything, and I don't know who Lycidas was, either," said Sir Godolphin chuckling.

"Oh, yes, of course you do," said Sarah patronizingly. "He was Milton's friend. You know how it goes :

" 'Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?
Ah, me ! I fondly dream
Had ye been there——'

Oh, there's a lot more. Then of course Gideon knows all about Buffon's 'Natural History' and all the different classes. I am just learning about the Annelida, the nice leeches, you know ; their teeth are like saws, and they have a sucking disc which fixes itself on to you. They are very curious and interesting. Do you like leeches, Uncle Dol ?

Sir Godolphin roared with laughter.

"Now then, Dan, how dare you tell me Gideon ought to go to school? I ought to send him to a desert island instead, so as to forget a little. To think I should live to be asked by a minx in a pinafore if I *like* leeches!" And Uncle Dol laughed till he had to wipe his eyes.

Sarah stood her ground. She shifted first on to one long leg and then on to the other, staring at her uncle with a kind of friendly wonder, not unmixed with contempt. She had dragged one of her long curls over her shoulder forward, and held the end in her mouth, munching it impatiently.

"Leave off wriggling, my dear, and put your hair back," admonished Aunt Rachel.

The child took no notice.

"*Sarah!*" said Uncle Dan with emphasis.

His niece turned to him.

"What?" she said naughtily.

"Aunt Rachel made a remark to you just now. Oblige me by attending to it."

"Oh, sucking my hair! I always forget. There!" and she stood square before Sir Godolphin, clasping her hands behind her, and looking straight at him with her azure eyes.

Her very fair face, with its clean, clear coloring and yellow hair, looked even fairer and cleaner than the long expanse of white pinafore which covered her. She was certainly the last child in all the country round to wear low frocks and short sleeves, and a less robust creature would have suffered from doing so, in such bitter weather. Her round firm arms looked mottled. Uncle Dol noticed it and remarked :

"Why, child, my little maid hasn't bare arms in this weather. Why don't you cover her up, Rachel?"

"Don't want covering up," cried Sarah, wrapping her arms in her pinafore. "If Gideon is to go to school I'd rather go back to him now, please, Uncle Dol. We shall have such a lot to settle first. Can I go to a school too, till he comes back, Uncle Dan?"

"Why, Sarah?"

"Because I can't stop here without him."

"I shall have to stop here without him," answered Uncle Dan.

"Don't be childish, Sarah. Run away now and read to Gideon," said Aunt Rachel.

But Sarah was looking at Uncle Dan's face, and wondering at his smile, as his eyes continued to regard her. She came and stood beside his knee and scanned his face eagerly.

"You are sorry, too, I do believe. Why do you send him away?"

"To help him to grow up into a strong and wise man."

"Shall you miss him as much as I shall?" she demanded.

"More, dear; much more."

"Then I will stay with you and take care of you," and she put her arm round his shoulder and leaned her head on his neck.

The long yellow curls touched Uncle Dan's silver ones, and lay on his coat; the blue eyes stared across at Uncle Dol, who watched her curiously; the child's fair hand lovingly stroked Uncle Dan's tanned cheeks.

"I didn't know before that you had quite such a com-

pensation," remarked Sir Godolphin as, having drained the silver mug, he set it down with a bang on the table.

His brother-in-law smiled and kissed the small hand which inadvertently Sarah passed across his lips during her scanning of Uncle Dol.

"You can send him away when you like," she announced royally. "I shall take care of Uncle Dan till he comes back." Then she choked down a sob and rushed from the room.

Miss Thornborough had produced her knitting. She was accustomed to somewhat lengthy discussions whenever her brother-in-law came, and knew his habit of carrying them on over the luncheon-table. Her brother pushed his chair round and sat staring into the fire.

Sir Godolphin got up and began striding about the room, his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes. He stopped opposite first one family portrait, then another; now examining old Jonathan Thornborough in scarlet coat and breeches, now that of the lovely but frail Diana, standing in a white satin dress on the terrace of Meads, her lace-ruffled hand on the head of her greyhound. He stopped long before the picture of his first wife, whose dark eyes laughed as merrily into his as they had done from the top of the Thornborough coach in years gone by. He sighed.

"God bless my soul, Dan, of course we must do our best for Jael's boy," he said at last, resuming his walk. "He is a Thornborough to the backbone; there is no Leigh blood in him."

Dan Thornborough looked amused. His long, nervous hands rested on the arms of his chair; he turned his head leisurely, and surveyed his stout, choleric, jovial brother-in-law.

"Gideon cares little for books," he remarked.

"Eh? What? No; he's a Leigh there, that's true enough. Well, Rachel, what do you say to losing the lad?"

"Whatever you and Dan decide will be the best, I have no

doubt. With Sarah, now, it would be different. Of course the deciding of her future will be my duty—a duty with which you and Dan will have but little to do.”

“Heyday, Rachel, I expect you will find Dan has a great deal to do with it when it comes to deciding anything for Sally.”

“Oh, Dol, of course. Why, you know I consult Dan upon every point. I only mean that the *responsibility* will rest with me instead of with Dan, Sarah being a girl, you see.”

“No, I confess I don’t see ; but it’s all right if you do. Besides, the little maid’s duty is clear enough—the boys to the horse, the girls to the spindle, is my maxim. By the by, Dan, what’s all this about that other girl of poor Jasper’s?”

“Mabel, you mean? Oh, she’s going to be married, that is all.”

“Who is the fellow?”

Miss Thornborough answered him.

“Oh, I can tell you all about it, Dol. It is to a gentleman of the name of Meakin. Percy Meakin is his name.”

“Humph! and a mighty poor name it is. Is he a decent sort of fellow? Seen him?”

“Yes ; he came here last week and stayed the night, the day Gideon and Sarah were over with you for the children’s party, and Sarah tore her new frock, and Gideon put his little brothers up in the apple tree, and——”

“There, there! Let the chicks alone and go on about Meakin,” interrupted Sir Godolphin impatiently.

“Oh, he was very well dressed and gentlemanly, and very polite to me. He is in the Civil Service, I believe.”

“Any money, Dan?”

“His salary, and two or three hundred a year.”

“Rides?”

“Yes.”

“Come, that’s hopeful. But stabling is expensive in town for a man on short commons.”

“My dear Dan, he never mentioned a horse except when

he said he could not ride," cried his sister, rubbing the side of her nose with her knitting-needle, with a puzzled air.

Dan Thornborough chuckled.

"Meakin hates dogs and rides a bicycle," he said quietly.

Sir Godolphin burst out laughing. He laughed and wiped his eyes and laughed again, gasping at intervals.

"A Thornborough to marry a fellow who can't ride and who is called Meakin! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! But then it is only Mabel. Eh? What? Dare-devil Sally with such a brother-in-law! A little chap, I'll be bound, too. Eh?"

"Five foot nothing, sandy hair, and a diamond ring."

"He cannot help his size, Dan," remonstrated Aunt Rachel.

"True, most true," replied her brother with an air of conviction, stroking his chin; and, continuing to look at Sir Godolphin with his whimsical smile, he added, "Oh, it is all right; Meakin is not exactly our sort. But then, you know, no more is Mabel."

"Monstrous pity she went to her mother's relations—a bloodless, fantastical set of town folk."

"Well, I don't know. The grandmother had a right to one of her grandchildren, I suppose. But it was just like poor Jasper to have chosen the right one to send to her; Sarah would never have suited her." Dan Thornborough spoke with decision, as he carefully picked some long yellow hairs off his coat sleeve.

"I suppose the fellow came up here to see what coin there was for Mabel, eh?"

"Yes. And oh, Dol, though she is not of age, Dan is going to——"

"There, there, Rachel, let the money be. Mabel is nineteen. I intend giving her five thousand pounds in addition to her own half; it is equivalent to Sarah's half of her father's money. Sarah will never want it. I wish Mabel to have all that was Jasper's. Sarah is mine," he added, half to himself.

Sir Godolphin Leigh halted in front of him.

"You mean——?" he asked.

"Who should have Meads when Rachel and I are gone, but Sarah?" said his brother-in-law. "Gideon must go to Leigh Court, I suppose."

"But Sally will marry, and the name of Thornborough has never failed in Meads yet!" exclaimed Sir Godolphin helplessly.

"The man she marries must take her name, Dol; I have thought it all out. Sarah will be what is commonly called 'a great catch,' but I think she has sufficient backbone to command the situation successfully and sensibly."

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated Uncle Dol, as he began his walk again.

He had never faced this question before. He had always vaguely imagined that somehow Gideon and Sarah would manage Meads between them, that he himself should outlive them all, but that if he did not, Gideon would also keep an eye on the Leigh Court estate. Facts began to settle themselves into some sort of order in his untidy mind, and it suddenly began to occur to him that if Gideon was to have a share in Meads and its income, he would have to marry Sarah Thornborough. And if so, in order that there might be still a Thornborough as master of Meads, there would have to be the name of Leigh lacking as master of Leigh Court, unless he left it to one of his younger sons. It was so very puzzling and bewildering that quite a long silence ensued, and he paced the long dining-room many times. At last he said:

"'Tis a monstrous pity a girl should have the run of so much money and land. She may marry the first good-looking booby who asks her, and then—whew—away will go the land and the money."

"That will not happen," returned his brother-in-law tranquilly.

"How the devil can you prevent it?" demanded Sir Godolphin testily.

"I shall bring up Sarah so that she will not be likely to marry a booby."

"That won't help you. A man who would change his name for the sake of a maid can't have much backbone. A fellow with any decent position or land of his own ought to want to keep his name on it."

"Perhaps she will not marry a man with land or position."

Sir Godolphin stared.

"God bless my soul, Dan, you don't mean to tell me that you hope Sally will marry a mere business man, or an out-at-elbows younger son, or a beggarly lawyer?"

"My dear Dan, surely you expect Sarah to marry a gentleman?"

"Most certainly I do, Rachel. But times are changed since we were young, when we thought nothing could be so fortunate as to join two estates by a marriage, and expected all our dependents to be proud to serve us, and eager to carry on our traditions. Why, only yesterday Ben came to tell me he thought of bringing up his eldest boy as an architect; while Old George tells me his youngest hates the country, and wishes to study in order to be a doctor. And Gray intends to sell Gray's Wick, I hear, as soon as he comes into the property; he prefers his foreign consulship, and Janions, the great confectioners, you know, are waiting to buy it."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed his sister.

Sir Godolphin Leigh grunted, and resumed his walk. Dan Thornborough smiled, and went on:

"Thus you see that the future that lies before Sarah is different to that which lay before us half a century ago or more, and I must fit her for it."

"How?" demanded his brother-in-law, halting in front of him, with his thumbs in his armholes and his legs well apart. "How? Eh?"

"I wish her to think for herself, to be more proud of supporting than of leaning, and not to be afraid of making decisions. I shall teach her to value people according to what they have achieved for themselves rather than according to what other people have achieved for them, and I wish her to

value the affections as highly as the intellect. I intend to teach her all that Jacob Frant and I know about the management of the land and the farms. I will have no fool reigning here after me, be it man or maid. No, I believe Sarah will never marry a booby."

Miss Thornborough rolled up her work; she thought it time to change the conversation.

"Come, Dol, and let me show you what Dan is sending to Mabel," she cried.

"Eh? What? Presents? Well, with my consent, Dan, Sally shall never marry any fellow in business or connected with trade. So now you know my mind on the matter." And Sir Godolphin, with a huge sigh of bewilderment, shook off his thoughts and followed his sister-in-law out of the room.

Dan Thornborough remained behind in his arm-chair, staring into the fire, a tolerant smile on his benevolent countenance.

On a side table in the oak-panelled, low-ceiled drawing-room a silver tea and coffee service was spread out, and beside it lay a large calf-bound Bible.

"Ah, very suitable, very solid and good; something for their babies to inherit. A fellow called Meakin isn't likely to leave them much else," chuckled Sir Godolphin. "Halloa," he went on, as he opened the Bible at the first page and read, in his brother-in-law's clear, large writing: "To Mabel Thornborough on her wedding-day," followed by the date. "Halloa! oughtn't there to be a text or something in a family Bible?"

"That is just what I have been seeking to prevail upon him to put in," cried Miss Thornborough triumphantly; "and I wanted him to put 'on her marriage' instead of 'on her wedding-day.'"

"I do not know her well enough to put a text," objected her brother, who now entered, "but I do know her well enough to judge that it will be a wedding only. A marriage is a different thing altogether. Sarah's will be a marriage."

"Dear me, Dan, you have so many curious distinctions it quite puzzles me. And as for Sarah, I fear very often you are but making a graven image of her, for which untoward love of the creature we must one day give an account, even though it be shown to a little orphan like Sarah."

"I shall be ready," said Uncle Dan calmly.

"For what?" asked his sister, rubbing a mark of damp off the silver cream-jug.

But Sir Godolphin's jolly voice gave her the answer:

"Let be, Rachel, let be. He is always ready for things; he and the Almighty understand each other in the matter of Sally, ay, and of my lad, too. You are monstrous good to them yourself, you know. Come, Dan, I may as well see the boy and tell him about this school business before I go."

Up to Gideon's bedroom they mounted. The low iron bedstead was tumbled, but no bruised hero lay on it; the pillow was missing, the window stood wide open, and snowflakes were drifting in on to the boards.

"Pretty draughty this, eh?" cried Sir Godolphin. "No pampering the lad up here. Where is he?"

"In the school-room, I expect," replied Dan Thornborough, stumbling over a book which had evidently fallen on to the floor from the bed. He picked it up.

"What's that?" demanded his companion.

"'Hoyle's Games.' He must have got it out of the library. I haven't looked at it for years."

"God bless my soul, Dan! Why, that's the 'Treatise on Game Cocks' your father lent to mine when I was a little chap. Give it to me. Why, on page 460 there ought to be the 'Rules for Horse-racing'—'To be observed by the owners and riders of all such Horses, Mares, or Geldings, as shall run for His Majesty's Plates at NEWMARKET.' I remember the heading. Stop a bit, here it is," and Sir Godolphin began rapidly reading scraps from the pages, intermingled with exclamations and chuckles of delight. "Bless me, I learnt faro and hazard and brag out of this

book; the lad is a bit of a Leigh, after all. Here's a bit of Sally's French exercise put in to mark the place in the 'Treatise on Game Cocks.' I'm sorry for that; it's not fit reading for a maid."

"Nor for Gideon," put in Dan. "It was a brutal sport, degrading to train for, and disgusting to witness. 'Tis a pity that treatise is in the book at all."

Uncle Dol turned and descended the stairs, saying, as he slipped the book into his pocket:

"Well, well, Dan, times are changed since those days, as you were saying. 'Rules observed at the Royal Cock-pit, Westminster.' Why, I used to know these rules by heart, and yet I never saw a cock-fight in my life. Monstrous queer how one learns without a bit of trouble anything that happens to interest you, isn't it?"

Dan Thornborough laughed.

"Now you understand why Sarah knows so much about leeches," he said.

"Good thing, too; if she is to grow up into a farmeress, she can't begin too soon. Halloa, Dan, there's nobody in here, and the fire is out. Where are they, do you suppose?"

Uncle Dan thought a moment, then led the way down the long passage back to the hall, where, reaching down his hat and coat, he remarked:

"Outside, I expect. Come across the yard with me."

So out across the yard in the bitter cold the two sturdy uncles stepped. The pump was encased in straw, the stables were closed, the light from the saddle-room fire danced on the window-pane. Old George sat within, reading his paper; Young George was leading out Sir Godolphin's horse.

"Quite right. Must be off in a quarter of an hour," he cried to the young man.

Through the yard, and on to the crisp, frozen grass toward an old shed, Dan Thornborough led the way. It was used for miscellaneous articles such as were discarded by the house, the stable, or the garden. It was lighted by a few

uneven panes of glass, roughly fitted into the wood-work, and incapable of being opened. Through these the two men looked into the interior. Strings of onions hung from the roof, old iron hoops, torn fruit-nettings, and mildewed stack-tarpaulins. On the floor were dilapidated garden-chairs, a broken wheelbarrow, stacks of flower-pots, part of a churn, and, immediately under the panes of glass, an old carpenter's bench. Upon this was spread out a map; the case lay face uppermost, immediately under Sir Godolphin's eyes. He read on a discolored label, pasted on its pink marbled back, Bowles' "New Pocket Plan of London, for the year 1786." Growing accustomed gradually to the dark interior, the eyes of the uncles at last made out a sack of straw on the earthen floor, and lying upon it was Gideon, his head supported by a bundle of pea-sticks, on which was laid a pillow; he was covered by a blanket. Perched beside him, on an enormous inverted flower-pot, sat Sarah, with a long-discarded overcoat of her uncle's tied round the shoulders by the sleeves. The long body of the coat fell over the flower-pot to the ground behind, giving her the appearance of some dwarf or gnome; her yellow head was the only bright thing in the dusty shed. She held a book in her hand, and was evidently reading to Gideon.

"What is it?" asked Sir Godolphin, in a loud whisper.

"'Idylls of the King,'" returned Dan Thornborough. "I know the binding. Queer idea to come out here, isn't it? I never disturb them. Jael and I used to go up into the corn-loft, I remember."

The two men stood watching them for some time. They were safe from discovery, for Gideon's head was bandaged and his eyes were shut.

"What's the map for, do you suppose? Not exactly the latest edition, is it?" asked Uncle Dol presently, as his eye fell upon "Hide Park," and the three bridges of London, "Black fryers," and Westminster, and the open fields of Southwark.

Uncle Dan rubbed his face thoughtfully, and replied :

"You told Sarah, you know, about Gideon going to school. I suppose school means London to her small mind. London is *terra incognita* to her, therefore she hunts up any map, date of no importance whatever. I take it that is what she has been doing, and they have come here to talk about it."

"Think so? Eh? Well, then, leave them to it. Boy and girl will be man and maid soon enough, soon enough. Ride over with Gideon in a day or two, when his stiffness wears off, and we'll settle the matter together. Better than disturbing them now, eh?"

"Ay," replied Uncle Dan, with what was unusual for him, a sigh, as they turned away together. "Ay, much better, Dol."

Sir Godolphin glanced at his brother-in-law, whose keen eyes were fixed upon an old nest swaying in the leafless branches of a tall elm. He was returning to a sprightly and healthy wife, and the laughter and pranks of his children; he looked forward to a hale old age at Leigh Court, cheered by sons and daughters and grandchildren. All the hopes for childless Dan Thornborough and for Meads were concentrated in one life—a girl's.

A gust of wind blew the crisp snow from off the shed into their faces, the boughs of the elm shook and bent and threatened to toss out the empty nest. Dan Thornborough had not spoken again, but Sir Godolphin, accustomed as he was to his frequent long silences, half expected some words to follow that almost solemn acquiescence, "Ay, much better, Dol."

Always impatient to throw off whatever saddened or annoyed him, he broke the silence by saying testily:

"Women have no logic and no judgment, or poor Dulcie would never have jilted you for that wine-sodden coxcomb. She might have seen how he would turn out. Bless my soul, I see her now. What a pretty creature she was!"

A shadow flitted across Dan Thornborough's fine features; he withdrew his gaze from the elm branches and stood still

and began feeling in his pockets. His brother-in-law waited, irritably scraping with his stick the snow from the gutter-pipe on the end of the shed. Dan carefully searched his pocket-book, and finally handed a letter to him, saying shortly :

"Read that."

"Eh? What? God bless my soul, the fellow is dead, is he?" cried Sir Godolphin in an astonished voice, when he had read the short letter. "Only last week, too," he added, turning it over to look at its date. "Poor girl, I wish it could have been t'other way round. Why, it must be five-and-twenty years ago since she died, and you have kept him in bread and cheese ever since that accident, haven't you?"

His brother-in-law slowly nodded his head in acquiescence.

"Pitiful scoundrel!" grunted Sir Godolphin; "white-livered coxcomb!"

"He had become a cripple, and she had loved him; let the dead rest," said Dan Thornborough sternly, as he held out his hand for the letter, which his companion was impatiently crunching up in his fist.

"Monstrous good fellow you are!" grumbled Sir Godolphin, as he relinquished it. "Dead! So he really died at last. Poor Dulcie! And to think you never saw her again!"

"Once."

"Eh? What? You never told me?"

"No; I never told anyone until now. You would have been the one I should have told had it been needful to mention it."

"Eh? What? Man alive, what a silent fellow you are! Well, I would cut my tongue out to keep any secret of yours."

"I know. Say no more about it. I have you and I have Sarah; also a share in Gideon. There is Rachel, too," he added.

"Rachel! Yes, of course, there is Rachel. And she is fond of every foot of Meads. And as for Sally, when she says

‘I believe in one God,’ I’ll be bound she thinks in her heart—Uncle Dan.”

Dan Thornborough smiled a peculiar, tender smile, which the mention of his niece always caused. He took his brother-in-law’s arm, and they strode in silence through the yard and along the carriage-drive to the front door, where Young George was walking the horse up and down. Both uncles were thinking of Sarah.

CHAPTER III

IN the following summer Mr. and Mrs. Meakin were invited to stay at Meads. The blue guest-chamber was duly put in order for them, and Miss Thornborough trotted in and out half a dozen times on the day that they were expected, to see that her handmaidens carried out all her orders. Finally she called in her brother to see how well the new chintz with the blue convolvulus pattern matched the old wall-paper, with its pattern of blue vine-leaves and straggling tendrils.

Dan Thornborough gave his sympathy patiently, as he looked at all that was required of him.

"It is well done, Rachel. Things are always comfortable in our house, thanks to you."

"Comfortable! Yes, Dan, but in truth I would like you to consider this more than *comfortable*. Mabel is a London young lady, you must recollect, and is accustomed to see the newest patterns and fashions."

"Then she will be glad to see old-fashioned ones for a change, I should think," returned her brother, smiling.

"I am not so sure, Dan. I think that, on the whole, people prefer what they are accustomed to; it saves them the trouble of having to cultivate an independent judgment."

"Perhaps. You are a shrewd woman, as I have often had occasion to remark to you," he said, putting his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

She beamed up in his face.

"I hope *we* shall not seem too old-fashioned to them; I should like Mabel to be fond of us," she said.

Keeping his hand on her shoulder, her brother drew her to the looking-glass, and tilted it to suit her small stature.

"Look! Can it be said that so dainty a hostess is old-

fashioned ? Surely these silver curls and this lace head erection, and this shining gown, like a moonbeam, defy both time and fashion."

Miss Thornborough smiled at the fair old face in the glass, and replied :

"A well-favored countenance is a gift from the Lord ; and in truth I am glad I bought this silver-gray poplin instead of the blue one. But your words are pleasant to hear, Dan, though I would that you set less store by the outward appearance."

"Where is Sarah ?" demanded her brother, who was accustomed to her admonishings on this subject.

"Being dressed by Susan, I trust," replied Miss Thornborough briskly, as she tilted the looking-glass back into position again, and smoothed the new chintz affectionately.

"I think not, for when I saw Gideon off with the phaeton, Sarah was flying up toward the top field, and I desired her to be here to welcome her sister."

"Susan !" called Miss Thornborough sharply, going out on to the landing.

Susan Frant, red-faced and out of breath, appeared at the door of her special domain, the work-room.

"Where is Miss Sarah ?"

"On the haystack in the top field, reading. I told her the master expected her to be ready when Mrs. Meakin came, but she said she must finish a story about a young lady whose husband made her lead a lot of horses. I'm just going out after her again."

"No," commanded Dan Thornborough. "Go back to your sewing, Susan. If she is not ready she will explain to me the reason."

"But, Dan——" objected his sister, while Susan seemed eager to remonstrate also; she could never see any fault in Sarah.

"She is reading 'Geraint and Enid,'" he said ; "she will not stir till she has finished it. She will not be ready ; she must give her own reasons for disobedience. Come, Rachel."

Reluctantly, Susan Frant returned to her sewing, and Miss Thornborough silently followed her brother down the great stone staircase, and out on to the stone porch, where they sat down in their special garden-chairs, to watch for their niece and her husband.

Meanwhile in the top field Sarah lay on the haystack; the sun beat full upon her, except in the shaded hollow she had scooped in the hay for her book. Everything was still and silent around her; she had forgotten all about Susan Frant and her uncle's orders. Since Gideon had been at school she had taken more than ever to her books as her companions, and devoured them with a ceaseless avidity that astonished even her uncle. Much that she read she learned by heart unconsciously and without effort. Therefore, having enviously seen Gideon start for the station driving the phaeton, she seized her book, and rushed away through the garden repeating to herself :

“ ‘ O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true!
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen! ’ ”

When she reached the haystack she climbed up on to it, and was soon wandering in that enchanted land she read about. Small wonder that an hour afterward Susan, calling her from below, only received for answer :

“ Oh, Susan, I say, just listen. He—

“ ‘ bound the suits
Of armor on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her ’

(she was his wife, you know, such a nice girl)

“ “ ‘ Drive them on before you,’
And she drove them thro' the waste! ’

Oh, I wish it had been me. I should like to have tried. What, Susan? Come in and be dressed? All right, presently. I sha'n't be long. Go away. Oh, do go, Susan, and don't bother."

So Susan Frant left her, knowing by experience that if she "bothered" too much she would not come at all. But the time went by, and happy little beetles crawled over Sarah's legs and hands, and lady-birds alighted on her book, and the clatter of pails from the cow-shed began to be heard, and at last, when she had finished the closing lines, she dreamily began to look about her. Across the lower end of the field the cows were slowly wending their way to the milking-shed. There were the beautiful dun Alderneys, and spotted Strawberry, her own especial pet, and the black-and-white Ayrshire who kicked over the pail unless her legs were fastened. Sarah thought she would go and have a glass of new milk; Ben, the cow-man, always kept the mug with the portrait of the Prince Consort on it on the ledge of the rafters. She scrambled down; the hay was sticking all over her hair, her cotton frock caught on the iron rail that separated the stacks from the rest of the field, a long tear resulted. "Bother!" ejaculated Sarah. Then she found she had left her hat on the stack, and had to go back and fetch it; then she tore her pinafore on the same obnoxious railing, and again said "Bother!" and finally reached the cow-shed just as the last cow was leisurely entering, meditatively swishing the flies off her back with her long tail. Sarah climbed on to the wooden gate and waited with her feet on the bar and her knees up to her chin. Ben was accustomed to her visits and knew what she had come for. Like all the farm people he always called her "Missy," and as such he now addressed her, as he reached up to the ledge for the "Prince Consort" mug and grunted out, "Milk, missy?"

"Yes, please; and oh, Ben, shall I read to you while you are milking? Could you hear, do you think, if I came and sat on the stool close to you?"

Ben grinned. "No, no, missy ; this is a mucky place ; we shall have Susan after us. Stay where you are."

"I don't care for Susan. I'm all torn already ; look here ;" and she spread out the rents for him to see.

But Ben had settled down to his work, and his head was already leaning against Strawberry's side ; he did not look up. Sarah sat and watched him. There was a great walnut-tree by the cow-shed, its branches waved in the gentle wind ; beneath it was a pool covered with green weed ; flies were darting hither and thither over it ; there were long black shadows on the grass from the tall elms.

"Haven't you done with Strawberry *yet* ?" demanded Sarah at last, heaving a great impatient sigh. "I'm tired of waiting."

Ben took up the mug, milked it full, and held it out to her.

"Here you are, missy," he cried.

Sarah slid down off the gate and went and took the mug in both her hands. Her thoughts were still with her book. Slowly she drank, while the white froth spread round her red lips and over the tip of her nose. Her eyes looked over the top of the mug at Ben all the time she was drinking.

"More, please," she demanded when she had finished.

Ben slowly milked into the mug again, remarking :

"You must bring Miss Mabel as was to see the milking, missy."

Down from her enchanted world fell Sarah Thornborough. Mabel was coming and Uncle Dan had told her to be ready. Why, Susan had even been to fetch her, and she had sent her away hours and hours ago. What time was it ? What was going on in the house ? Had they arrived ? Aunt Rachel would say she had been disobedient, and Uncle Dan would not say anything, which was much worse, and Gideon—well, Gideon would only laugh and say, "Books again, Sarah !" On the whole, Sarah thought she would rather not go into the house just yet. She thought she would not like to meet them all in that dirty torn frock. How horrid it was that

Mabel was coming at all ! Why need Gideon have gone to meet her ? Everything was horrid.

"Here, missy !" cried Ben.

Sarah had got into that mood where people feel they may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. She pushed his large freckled hand away roughly. The mug he held out to her on his open palm, that the handle might be free for her to take, was jerked to the ground and broken in two. Ben looked ruefully at the wasted milk.

"Why, *missy* !" he remarked with slow surprise, staring at her hot face.

"I don't want any more milk. I'm going to see Jacob. I shall have tea with him. They won't want me," declared Sarah, turning away. "I'm sorry the Prince Consort mug is broken, but it does not matter ; nothing matters."

Ben went on with his work stolidly ; he was not a moralist. Sarah pursued her way slowly across the sunny meadow, dragging her feet, and angrily switching off the tops of the tall daisies with the hat she held in her hand. Under a group of walnut-trees, near the barn in the next field, stood two separate cottages in gardens. One was considerably larger than the other ; it had a piece of kitchen-garden, and a row of beehives was set under the red brick wall which divided it from the field. All the rest of the garden was full of flowers in luxuriant trained confusion. Here were to be seen masses of mallow, white and pink, blue love-in-a-mist, lupin, and larkspur ; here were bushes of lavender, and roses red and white and yellow, patches of flaming poppies, and rows of sweet-peas and tall white lilies. Over the cottage climbed purple clematis and honeysuckle. Jacob Frant lived here alone ; in the smaller cottage adjoining lived his married daughter, who saw to all that was necessary for his comfort. Many a time had Gideon and Sarah halted at his cottage in their wanderings in field and lane to discuss the bees, and examine the coops of young chickens, or carry the fluffy ducklings to the pond to see them start swimming.

Sarah Thornborough pushed open the gate and went into the garden slowly, kicking the stray pebbles out of her way up the box-edged path. She stopped in the open doorway and said, "Jacob, I'm come to tea with you."

The smoke from Jacob Frant's pipe could not quite dispel the scents from the flower-laden air, but the parlor seemed close and dark to Sarah after the bright sun outside.

Jacob Frant, lean, brown, and observant, was sitting in his shirt sleeves at the round table, studying a pamphlet on manures. He drew off his horn-rimmed spectacles and surveyed Sarah from under his bushy eyebrows as she stood inside the dark doorway with the sunny brilliant garden behind her. He carefully put a piece of twisted paper to mark his place, folded the pamphlet and put it on a shelf behind him, in company with his Bible and his account-book, laid his pipe on the edge of the mantel-piece between the white china dog and the orange-and-blue china shepherd, and, opening a cupboard in the wall, began to get out plates and cups. Sarah came in and sat down on the enormous chintz sofa which took up all one side of the room. Jacob Frant was even a more silent man than his master ; it was one of his many maxims that "a fool is known by his much talking." Sarah generally chattered to him unceasingly, but to-day she seemed to have nothing to say. The sharp bailiff was soon aware of it, but he said nothing till, having set the japanned tea-tray to his satisfaction, he pushed the table up to Sarah and said in his gruff voice :

"What's amiss, child ?"

"Nothing," answered Sarah airily, swinging her legs and drumming on the table.

"Well, well, 'tis ill 'pouring water on a drowned mouse.' Sit still while I step across to Polly with the teapot."

"Let me take it," cried Sarah, jumping up again ; and, seizing the teapot, she held it open while Jacob shook in the tea from the canister painted with roses, which was the most

beautiful of all his possessions in Sarah's eyes. He and she never took out the tea with a teaspoon.

"Are we going to have jam?" she asked eagerly, as, teapot in hand, she watched Jacob fitting on the canister lid again.

"Black currant," he answered, replacing the canister on the shelf.

Sarah went out with the teapot down the pebbly garden path, past the flowers and up to the next cottage. Polly had seen her go into her father's and stood waiting in her doorway, her baby in her arms.

"Well, missy, you want my hot water; I thought you would. I'm right down surprised to see you come to tea with father to-day, and all so torn too. I thought you'd be with Miss Mabel, maybe."

"She had not come when I left the house," said Sarah stoutly. "I can hold baby while you fill the teapot;" and she sat down on the grass and held out her arms.

Polly lowered the fat baby carefully into them.

"Mind his rattle, missy; he's getting powerful strong. See he don't hit you with it."

The baby cheerfully banged Sarah on the head with the valued silver rattle, now battered and worn—a gift long years back from one of Sarah's ancestors to one of Polly's. Sarah jogged him up and down, and the banging went on till Polly came out again with the teapot wrapped up in a clean cloth.

"It's scalding hot, missy; mind how you take it. Oh, baby; naughty to knock missy like that!"

"I don't mind," said Sarah; "it doesn't hurt. I like him;" and, relinquishing the baby to his delighted mother, she took up the swathed teapot and returned to Jacob's cottage.

He had not been idle. A huge plate of bread and jam stood opposite Sarah's plate, and a saucer of sage and mint leaves floating in water stood beside it. There was a bowl

of honey in the comb, and milk in a white jug with a man's grinning face for a spout, and a boy escaping over a stile from an enraged bull depicted on its side.

But Sarah's heart was too heavy to rejoice in these her loved festivities, and she sat down on the sofa again without a word.

"Where's Gideon?" demanded Jacob, as he drew up his great wooden arm-chair to the table and took his seat.

"Gone to meet them."

Jacob knew who "them" meant, and he knew how much Sarah had missed Gideon.

"Well, never mind, child. Best speak out. There's something more amiss than rents and crumples."

"I hate her!" declared Sarah, savagely tearing a refractory crust from her slice of bread and jam.

"Heyday!" he cried.

"I wish I was dead!" she declared again.

"That's a fool's wish, and you are no fool. Do not anger the Lord," he said gravely.

"What would He do to me?" demanded Sarah with interest.

"Take from you your many blessings and set your feet in a hard way, perchance, child. 'Tis ill sitting in the dark; best speak out and come into the light again. What's amiss, little one?"

But Sarah could find no words. She went on devouring with angry rapidity, and gulping down her miseries with the hot tea Jacob provided her with. The black currant jam stained her lips and face; she had dropped it on her pinafore; she looked naughty and cross and miserable.

Jacob Frant spread himself a thick sandwich of bread and butter, laying a layer of mint leaves in between. He took a long time over it, and there was silence in the cottage. Bees buzzed in and out of the open door and lattice windows; a wasp hovered over the honey; Grip, Jacob's great dog, lay across the doorway winking at the flies.

"The way to Babylon will never bring you to Jerusalem," remarked Jacob at last.

"Who wants to go to Jerusalem? And I don't see why you talk about Babylon, Jacob."

"I expect you've done something wrong, child, and instead of undoing it you only sit there wishing you were dead."

Sarah was far too quick a child not to see the application; also she had been accustomed all her life to Jacob's way of putting things. She made no answer, but held out her cup for some more tea, saying affably :

"I'm glad I've got the cup with the forget-me-nots on it. It was your wife's, wasn't it, Jacob?"

"Ay," he replied.

He was in many ways like Dan Thornborough, having for years looked upon him as his model.

"You often say 'ay,' just like Uncle Dan, but yet you aren't like him in everything, Jacob. He never has his meals in his shirt sleeves. I wish he did, and I wish Aunt Rachel wore a sun-bonnet like Polly, and I wish it didn't matter that my frock is all torn, and—well, what do you look at me so for, pray?"

"A horse is neither better nor worse for his trappings. I see you've been a naughty maid, and you wish we were all like you. You've a mind that it is more comfortable to be dirty than clean. Give over hiding it up, child, or it will be a thorn in your flesh."

Sarah tossed her head. "I don't care," she said recklessly.

"Perhaps the master does; 'tis ill angering him, though he says naught," observed Jacob, taking out his large silver watch and looking at it reflectively.

Sarah was silent; she suddenly evinced deep interest in melting a lump of sugar in some hot tea in her spoon.

Jacob Frant saw his advantage, and went on, as he slowly polished the case of his watch with the palm of his hand:

"The day will come as a thief in the night when the Lord will say to the master, 'Well done, thou faithful servant'; and lo, we shall look for him and shall not find him, and his place will know him no more."

Sarah's eyes blazed; she threw down her spoon with a clatter, spilling the melted lump on the cloth.

"How *dare* you, Jacob? I know what you mean. You think that when he is dead I shall be sorry to have vexed Uncle Dan. Just as if I'm not miserable enough now while he's alive. Why, I *couldn't* be more miserable than I am now. I sha'n't ever be happy any more. I should like to die now, directly, and be buried here in your garden."

"Come, my dear, it's not so bad as that. Confess your fault, and the Lord will pardon you."

"I don't care for the Lord. It's Uncle Dan. Here, take the horrid book and burn it; it's all through that. I sha'n't ever read it any more."

And Sarah produced the cherished "Idylls" from beneath her pinafore and thrust it into Jacob's hand, who took it, puzzled at the tearless storm he had raised. He put it up on the shelf with his papers and account-books, saying as he glanced out of the window:

"Here they all come."

"Who?" cried Sarah, jumping up and peeping under his arm.

"Yon. Do you see, child? The master, and Miss Mabel with the parasol, and Gideon, and the little chap with the glass in his eye will be Mr. Meakin, walking with Miss Rachel."

"Are they coming here?" gasped Sarah.

"Ay. Move, child; I must put on my coat;" and Jacob proceeded to take it down from a nail behind the door.

Sarah turned from red to white and to red again, but she stood her ground with her hands clasped behind her.

"It's like the Judgment Day, Jacob," she said under her breath; "they'll all know now, won't they?"

He surveyed her with grim and proud approval.

"Ay, child. That which is said in the ear will be heard on the housetops. 'Most things have two handles, and a wise man takes hold of the best.' There's the back door and they won't see you; will you go or stay?"

"I shall stay," she answered, going and standing behind Jacob's wooden arm-chair.

He made a step forward and laid his knotted hand on her bright rough head. "The Lord be with thee," he said tenderly, and then voices began to be heard as the party entered his garden.

"Jacob! Jacob Frant, I have brought my husband to see you. Do you remember me?" cried the clear sweet voice of the Thornboroughs, and Jacob went out of his dark parlor into the sunshine to receive Mabel Meakin. She was a slim dark girl of middle height. She was dressed very fashionably, and her clothes looked as though they had been moulded on to her. She had a languid way of looking round for help, which apparently she generally obtained, for Gideon Leigh stood close by her, holding a gold scent-bottle, a fan, and a scarlet parasol with a heavy embossed silver handle. He had shot up into a well-groomed and beautiful youth. The three years he had in advance of Sarah made a perceptible difference now, for she still remained an untidy child.

"Halloa!" he cried, catching sight of her where she stood holding on to the wooden chair with one hand, and dragging a long curl of hair between her teeth with the other. Everybody knew this habit of Sarah's when she was excited or naughty. Sir Godolphin Leigh encouraged it; it made "Sally look more dare-devil than ever," he declared. Aunt Rachel, as has been seen, waged constant war against it, but so far with but poor success.

"Halloa, my cherub, so here you are! Come and speak to Mabel; she is awfully keen on knowing you."

Sarah did not move; her eyes were riveted on Dan Thornborough, who stood just outside the door talking to Percy Meakin. Gideon saw there was something wrong; somehow Sarah looked rather in a mess, he thought. Mrs. Meakin had followed him in. She came up to Sarah and took her by both hands and kissed her.

"Oh, Sarah, dear, how glad I am to see you! How you

are grown ! You were only a little scrap of a thing when I saw you last. Come and sit down on the sofa here beside me. My fan, please, Gideon ; it really is very warm ;" and she leaned back against the sofa pillows and drew her little sister down beside her.

Gideon bent over her and fanned her with a courteous gallantry that was new to Sarah.

"So you have been having tea here 'with Jacob Frant, have you ? What a mess you are in, dear ! But what lovely looking jam ! No wonder its attractions were stronger than the desire to see me."

"It wasn't *jam* that made me forget," cried Sarah scornfully.

"Wasn't it, dear ? Well, never mind. That will do, Gideon, thanks. Give me that footstool, will you ? What a queer little room this is ! I wonder if Jacob would sell us that corner-cupboard. I must tell Percy to ask him. I tried everywhere for one in no end of old furniture shops. You shall come and see my house, Sarah."

"If Gideon comes too," said the child, beginning to be attracted by the perfume from the fan, and the rustle of the dress, and the bewildering number of her sister's movements.

"Ah, stick to the old love, quite right. Oh, Percy, you've done talking at last. Here is Sarah. Country manners and dress, you see."

"The genuine article," he answered.

Sarah scented a slight in the smile that passed between husband and wife. She was up in arms directly, as Percy Meakin came toward her and held out his hand, saying carelessly :

"How d'y' do ?"

"I am quite well, thank you. And please, I wish to say that it is not Aunt Rachel's fault that I am all torn and dirty and wasn't at the front door when you came. I was told to, and I read on the top of the haystack instead. And Susan came to fetch me, and I wouldn't go. And there's my white silk frock and sash on my bed, ready for me to put on, and

you can go and look at it, if you don't believe me, and take *him*, too," and she pointed at Percy Meakin.

"What a coil about nothing. I dare say you look very nice in the white frock, little girl. True daughter of Eve, isn't she, Mabel?"

Then Gideon interposed, laughing :

"Sarah thinks your remark about country dress and manners is a reflection upon my uncle and aunt," he explained.

Sarah did not thank him. She was watching her uncle's back, and wondering that he did not turn round. He *must* have heard her confession.

"Oh, I see," said Mabel, yawning, and getting up. "Well, if I were you, Sarah, dear, I wouldn't get into a temper about nothing. Come up to my room when you are dressed, and I'll show you all my jewelry. What nice hair you've got, dear. Hasn't she, Percy? One kiss. There, now we must be going. Percy, I hope you have been talking to Jacob Frant. He is a most intelligent man for his station, and always expects to be taken notice of, I believe. Come, Gideon."

Percy Meakin turned to Sarah.

"Aren't you coming?" he asked.

She shook her head violently.

"Well, then, we must hope to be better acquainted at breakfast, I suppose."

Sarah stared at him, and then Miss Thornborough, who had stayed at Polly's cottage to give orders about some work she was doing for her, came bustling in.

"My dear Sarah, I hope you have apologized to your sister and your new brother for being absent on their arrival. Little girls should never forget their manners."

But Sarah was past speaking. She had painfully delivered her testimony, and they had only thought she was in a temper, and cared about jam, and had made a fuss about nothing. And all the time Uncle Dan had not taken the least notice of her, but stayed outside talking to Jacob.

"You do not look quite the thing ; you have eaten too much

tea, I fear, child. Well, there, never mind, I do not wish to make you cry. You forgot your uncle's orders and are doubtless sorry. We will say no more about it. Shall we go, Mr. Meakin?"

He followed the dainty figure, put up her large blue sunshade for her, and Sarah saw them pass the window behind her sister and Gideon. She stood quite still in a whirl of passionate anger and rebellion. She choked back the long pent-up sobs that were rising in her throat, and furiously rubbed away the tears that were filling her eyes. Nobody should see her cry.

Uncle Dan remained in the garden. He had moved from the porch where he had stood most of the time, and was now standing on the path, with his back to the door, giving some directions to Jacob Frant. Sarah saw him, with his stick tucked under his arm, writing on a leaf of his notebook. She stalked to the window and put her head out. He would be obliged to pass it in going to the gate; if he did not look back at her then she should know that he was very angry, or, worse still, had perhaps forgotten all about her. She tore off the leaves of honeysuckle and the clematis flowers in her rage, and threw them out on to the garden path. The murmuring of the men's voices stopped. Sarah hung further out of the window and waited breathlessly, tearing off the leaves faster and faster.

Presently she felt a touch on her shoulder, and wriggled herself back into the room and faced her uncle.

"Come, Sarah, we will walk home together," he said, holding out his hand.

Then Sarah's anger was stilled and the awful load lifted from her heart.

"Oh, Uncle Dan, I'm sorry," she wailed, as clutching his arm, and laying her head against it, she gave one great sob.

He picked up her hat, tied it carefully on for her, put his arm round her and said, as they went to the door together:

"Leave off crying; it is all over. Did you think I had

forgotten you ? It would not have been strange if I had, for you forgot me, you know."

Sarah looked up in his face and met the whimsical smile she knew so well, and was comforted. Out into the bright garden they came, where Jacob stood holding open the gate. He waved his hand toward his flowers.

"Do you want to die and be buried there now directly, child ?" he asked gravely.

But Sarah, feeling her uncle's arm tighten round her, leaned closer to him and shook her head, but did not answer.

"A wild goose never laid a tame egg," said Jacob to his master, nodding at Sarah.

Dan Thornborough smiled and replied :

"Ay, a bird of the old flock. Good-night, Jacob."

Sarah wondered what they meant, but was too happy to trouble to ask.

The next morning the Meakins were agreeably surprised at the fair, fresh edition of Sarah that made its appearance at prayers, affably smiling, with her beautiful hair shining like spun gold over her clean frock. She took her place at breakfast beside her aunt, and slowly discussed her plate of porridge in silence, staring the while at her new relation, who was keeping up a running fire of talk with Gideon about the places abroad he and Mabel had just come from.

Presently he remarked :

"Well, you can take my word for it, there is no change so complete and no rest so thorough for a hard-worked man, as a few weeks abroad. I don't know anything of England myself and don't wish to, but I flatter myself I am a pretty good guide-book for anybody who wants to go to the places abroad that I have been to."

Sarah paused, holding a spoonful of porridge halfway between her plate and her mouth. Percy Meakin began to appear in quite an interesting light to her. She stared thoughtfully at him, saying dreamily: "*I should like to go abroad, too.*"

"Should you?" he asked good-naturedly. "Well, perhaps some day your uncle will let you come with us, if you ask him."

"And Gideon, too?"

There was a laugh round the table.

"Gideon, too, of course, if he wants to come, but I dare say he will have been half a dozen times before you are grown up," answered Percy Meakin.

"Can't you wait for me?" asked the child entreatingly.

"Oh, yes, I dare say, Sarah. But look here, I expect you will want to go to a different place to what I do. That will be jolly awkward, won't it?"

"I wish to go to Iceland and Timnath, and to Paris and to Bethlehem," announced Sarah with decision.

Dan Thornborough spoke for the first time in the discussion, for a chorus of laughter followed and the red color had mounted over Sarah's clear brow.

"Let me hear your reasons, Sarah," he said gently.

She turned eagerly to him.

"Why, uncle, dear, you told us about the great high-spouting springs, you know, all hot, in Iceland; then I should like to see where Samson killed the lion all by himself; and then there was the French Revolution; and then—oh, then, of course, you all want to see Bethlehem yourselves," she ended, looking triumphantly round the table.

"What a queer child!" said Percy Meakin to his wife in an undertone.

"What a large order, isn't it, Aunt Rachel?" asked Gideon.

"Yes, dear," said Uncle Dan quietly; "those are very interesting places, but when you go with Mabel and Percy I think you must let them choose; as they have been abroad so often they know more about it than you and I do."

Afterward, while sauntering round the garden, Mabel Meakin observed to her uncle: "Sarah ought to be with other children; it is bad for a child always to be with grown-up people."

A pang shot through Dan Thornborough's heart that he might not, after all, be doing the best for his darling.

"You think so?" he said anxiously.

"I am sure of it. Couldn't she go to school?"

"No, certainly not!" he cried emphatically.

"Ah, well, perhaps not right away from here. But isn't there any place she could ride over to in the town and be fetched back in the afternoon?"

"I must see," he replied; "there may be merits in the proposition. You have lived more among children, Mabel. I suppose they like each other's society?"

"Why, of course," she answered cheerfully; "we look quite old fogies to them. Sarah takes things too much to heart. I'll drive over to the town with Aunt Rachel and look round, if you like, and we will go and ask the Howards. It would be a pity for Sarah to grow up different from other people, wouldn't it?"

There was a twinkle in Dan Thornborough's eyes as he picked a crimson rose from the bush they were passing, and presented it to his niece with the grand courtesy which had made Percy Meakin confide to his wife the night before that "Your uncle is a fine old bird."

"Sweets to the sweet, niece," he said. "I desire that Sarah should miss none of the happinesses that should pertain to her youth. So, if children's companionship be best for her, as I doubt not is true, she shall have it. I am obliged to you for the suggestion."

"Oh," said Mabel, looking gratified, "I'm sure you and Aunt Rachel have done everything that is right and good for her. I only hope she is grateful."

"No," he said, as he drew a garden-chair on to the gravel for her. "No, I am thankful to say that I believe it never enters Sarah's head to be grateful."

She stared at him. "How very odd!" she said.

Part II

THE HAYS OF BYRON VILLA

"We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides ;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

"With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built, do we discern."

CHAPTER I

BYRON VILLA stood in a long road with semi-detached villas on either side. These had little front gardens separated from the road by a low iron railing, and little back gardens separated from the railway by high wooden fencing. Young sycamores, straggling chestnuts, and bushes of arbutus helped to fill up the bareness at the front, while the back gardens were generally planted with potatoes and artichokes and a few patches of sweet-peas. It was a very neat road, and all the people who lived in it were neat, kindly, and very respectable. They were almost all of the same social position ; the two great exceptions were the family who lived at Glengowry (these washed at home, and hung their linen out in the back garden) and the family at Chandernagore (these had asphalted their back garden from fence to fence, their many children kept rabbits, and there was always a puppy who squealed and a baby who cried). But then it

was always hoped that the "people" from Glengowry and Chandernagore would move soon, and meanwhile nobody visited them. There were several widows in the road, several maiden ladies, and a few young married couples. The men went into London every day from the new little suburban station close by, and the women occupied their days in keeping house, calling on each other's "At Home" days, making their clothes, or visiting the poor, according to their several bents.

Everyone kept a servant. It was a point of honor among the ladies not to go to each other's houses on any pretext whatever till a reasonable time after lunch, so that the servant should have had time "to dress"; if at this hour she opened the door in her cotton dress, that household was kindly but firmly spoken of as "badly managed."

Byron Villa was exactly like all the other houses in the road, but the few yards at the back were sown with grass seed, and used as a tennis lawn. Here, every Saturday afternoon during the summer, certain youths in shirt sleeves, and maidens in discarded "best" skirts, and blouses more or less badly fitting, amused themselves happily together, as youths and maidens have done, and will continue to do, in spite of small means, shabby clothing, and no possible provision for the future.

The maidens were Ada, Augusta, and Jessie Hay; the youths were their only brother, Edward, and Tom King, son of the doctor in the next road. Sometimes Herbert Moore, the vicar's only son, and Flora Moore, the vicar's only daughter, came, but that was when they happened to know that Edward and Augusta Hay were at home.

Mrs. Hay, placid, stout, and comely, would sit just inside the window of the twelve-feet square drawing-room watching the party, a perennial smile on her simple countenance, knitting socks for her son, or making lace trimming for her daughters, happy in the conviction that there never had been such dutiful, attractive, and beautiful children as her own.

The good-natured, untidy servant would bring out a tray of glasses, containing the lemonade the Hay girls had made in the morning, and set it down on the wooden bench for the thirsty players. "Afternoon tea" was done away with on Saturdays; the whole party sat down to a tea-supper, at half-past seven, of cold meat, water-cress, jam tartlets, and hot tea-cakes.

Mrs. Hay was a widow. Her husband had been vicar of a country parish; they had lived in a roomy, rambling old house, with garden, paddock, tennis lawn, and stable.

The girls were strong, noisy creatures, without a talent of any sort except that of amusing themselves, and without a taste, except that for good-natured gossip, perpetual parties, and perpetual changes of raiment. Edward Hay was only like his sisters in so far that he was strong and well-grown.

All the time that had not been used in riding to and from school in the neighboring town, he had spent with his father, either among his books in the study or walking with him through field and lane on his parish visits. Mr. Hay had for years been engaged upon a history of the families in his county, and, as soon almost as he could read, his son had shared his work.

There was not a brass or a monument or a parish register in the county that was unknown to father and son. The boy taught himself to illuminate, to draw coats of arms. He would stay in the town an hour after school to learn bookbinding in a musty shed in a close back street. He bound roughly, but with astonishing ease, his father's sheets and his own beautiful drawings, copying out in his clerkly hand all the blotted or crabbedly written ones.

Edward Hay was destined for the university and the Church, but when he was sixteen his father died, and his mother's only brother offered him a clerkship in his flourishing business in London.

Mrs. Hay came up to town, and by the advice of her rich and bustling sister-in-law explored the little suburb, and a

year after her husband's death settled down in Byron Villa. Neither she nor her daughters greatly regretted the old home ; they were tired of the large, half-empty country church, with its rustic congregation, the stillness of lanes and fields, the difficulty of visiting their scattered neighbors. The sight of roads full of neat villas, and the possibility of attending at least three different churches on a Sunday, promised them infinite variety ; and the girls felt there was indeed something to live for, when they heard of weekly teas on the cricket-field, amateur concerts at the town-hall, and working-parties for various charities.

It was now seven years since they had settled down in Byron Villa, and all that time Edward Hay had lived his solitary life, going up to town at eight o'clock, returning between six and seven in the evening, and between two and three o'clock on Saturdays.

The steady, heavy-looking boy had grown into a handsome, somewhat silent man, tolerant of the life he had to lead, affectionate to his mother, indulgent to his sisters.

One determination, of which he never spoke, but which guided all his actions, was that he did not intend to be all his life a paid clerk, and live in suburbs. He had nobody to advise him, his colleagues had no standards beyond the very one he was struggling against, and the family friends at home had little sympathy with ideals.

If there was any cloud upon the calm in which Mrs. Hay moved—a calm that even her husband's death had only very temporarily broken, it was that Jessie, her youngest born, had of late shown a tendency to discontent, and an aptitude for making curious remarks which Mrs. Hay could not understand.

Jessie Hay was in this mood now, as she sat on the window-ledge of the front sitting-room, staring across the parched plot of grass into the road.

"Don't lean against the curtains, Jessie, love ; you will tear them off their hooks," said her mother.

"Why do we have curtains? People can't see in. I only wish they could!" returned Jessie dreamily.

"Thank Heaven they can't!" cried Augusta briskly, "just when I'm trying on this new blouse."

"Well, you look very nice in it. As your hair is inclined to be red, I am glad you had the sense to make a blue one, instead of a pink one, like Ada's. Oh, Ada, don't put those red flowers in my hat!"

Ada, with her mouth full of pins, turned the hat, with an energetic twist, toward Mrs. Hay. "Look, mother!" she cried.

"I like red, Jessie, love; against your dark hair it will look very nice. But, now you are eighteen, you should be able to trim your own hats, you know."

"I don't like trimming hats, mother; and Ada does them so beautifully. I like——"

"Sitting in the infirmary all day, and hearing about the cases," interrupted Augusta; "and yet, you know, you aren't a bit more sorry for the poor things than I am, or Ada, or mother!"

"I don't think being sorry has anything to do with it; it is all so curious, that is why I go."

"Well, don't you come near me if I am ever ill, Jess. I dare say I'm as curious as most people, but I'd rather be looked after by somebody who was sorry for me," cried Augusta, in her clear, jolly voice.

"There goes the two-thirty; Edward will be in directly," said Mrs. Hay, when the puffing of an engine drowned for some moments all conversation.

"I wish there would be an accident," remarked Jessie reflectively.

"Horrid child!" cried both her sisters.

"I don't want anyone to be killed, but I should like just to see an accident," persisted Jessie.

"Well, if you serve to Tom as you did last Saturday, I dare say you'll see an accident," declared Augusta, with conviction.

Jessie pouted, and said :

"Tom should not play tennis ; he is too short-sighted ; isn't he, Ada ?"

"Oh, I don't know. There, I've finished this hat at last. Put it on, Jess. No, not like that ; let me do it. There, child. Look, mother."

Mrs. Hay looked obediently, but it was at the placid, large-framed Ada, whose imperturbable good-temper was so like her own. She was the eldest of the family, and they all regarded her as a model of good sense. Jessie remained sitting on the window-ledge, her curly head bent for her sister to arrange the hat.

"I know somebody who will think you have trimmed that hat beautifully, Ada, dear," said Mrs. Hay, with a knowing smile.

"Tom King,
Bring the ring,
All on a summer morning,"

sang Augusta, as she arranged her fringe carefully under her straw hat in front of the chimney-glass.

"Shut up, Gus!" cried Ada good-humoredly. "It is Jessie Tom comes after, not me."

"He laughs with Jessie, but he admires you most, Ada. He said the other day that you were the finest girl he knew, and took the cake for good nature."

Ada Hay laughed her slow, comfortable laugh, and turned the tables on her sister by saying :

"Is Herbert Moore coming this afternoon, Gus ?"

"Have not the slightest idea, my child. Flora won't, of course. She freckles so in the sun, and she is not so keen on tennis as I am."

"One each," remarked Jessie irrelevantly.

"One what?" cried Augusta, sitting down on the arm of her mother's chair, and beginning to undo a paper parcel.

"One other half ; you and Herbert, and Tom and Ada,

and Flora for Edward. I think, mother, *I* should like to go away and earn some money."

"Well, dear, do, if you like."

"Gracious, Jess, what's the matter with you this afternoon?" cried Augusta, triumphantly drawing from the parcel, and holding up, a cardboard picture of a white swan sailing upon a pond overshadowed with green grasses; a blue dragon-fly and a green beetle hovered above the swan, and a border of gilt paper enclosed the picture. "There!" she exclaimed, "don't talk about earning money, but look at *that*!"

"Lovely!" declared Ada rapturously.

"What is it for, dear?" asked Mrs. Hay.

"For the fireplace in the drawing-room. I bought it at the post-office, and these two Japanese fans, just to brighten us up a bit."

"Sweet," said Ada again.

"How very nice, dear; just what I always wanted your dear father to have, but he never would let me buy them."

"I think, mother, I should like to give out the tickets at a booking-office," began Jessie, ignoring the new fire ornament.

"It would be very draughty, dear; you would always be having toothache."

"Besides, suppose a drunken man came and asked for a ticket, whatever would you do *then*?" asked Ada, as she put pins and cottons away in her rosewood work-box.

"Give it him, of course."

"Suppose it was the race time?"

"It would be very interesting. I should see such lots of people," persisted Jessie.

"Oh, Jessie, what a little goose you are! You know you can't be a railway clerk; what's the good of bothering about it?" cried Augusta, putting straight her mother's cap bow.

Jessie turned her head and looked out of the window.

"I shall talk to Edward about it," she said calmly.

"Oh, yes; of course he'll know," cried Augusta; "men



always know those sort of things. I say, Ada, I am afraid we can't go out till it's cooler, can we?"

"Well, I don't know, let's see; there is a little shade on the gravel path by the water-butt, but there is only room for three, the rest must sit inside on the window-ledge," declared Ada, yawning, and stretching her fine arms over her head.

"Here comes Edward," announced Jessie, peering out down the road.

"Dear boy! It is really terrible to be obliged to wear a silk hat in this weather," said Mrs. Hay. "Just call to the girl to bring in his dinner, Ada."

"If I were Edward I would have my dinner in town on Saturdays," declared Augusta.

"He gets it for nothing here."

"Now, Jessie, that's a beastly shame of you; you know there is not a grain of meanness in Edward."

"I merely stated a fact," returned Jessie coolly.

"It was the nasty tone in your voice. People can make quite a simple thing sound nasty or nice; can't they, mother?"

"There, there, girls, don't quarrel. Jessie, love, I am afraid you are not well. Ah, here comes my dear, tired lad."

Edward Hay came into the hot little room, kissed his mother, and sat down on the nearest vacant seat, which happened to be the music-stool. There was a red rim all across his forehead where his hat had rested, and distinct signs of coal-dust remained round his eyes, his thick brown hair lay moist on his brow, his coat was dusty. Glancing round, his dark eyes fell upon Augusta's purchase. "What is that?" he asked.

"Oh, isn't it perfectly *lovely*? I only gave one and elevenpence halfpenny for it," cried his sister.

"It looks like it."

"My dear boy, don't you admire it?"

"No; I think it is hideous."

"*Edward!*" remonstrated his family in chorus.

"Hideous and out of place!" he declared again.

"Oh, you have not a scrap of taste. What a mercy it is the house is not left to you!"

"A great mercy, Gus. When is my dinner coming, mother?" he asked, turning round on his music-stool.

"Ada is gone to hurry the girl. Why, my son, you look very hot."

He smiled at her.

"And very dirty too, I expect, mother. Hot? Yes, I should think so. I shall go up in a straw hat on Monday, if this weather lasts. Tom King came down in my carriage. He is coming along presently. He asked me to tell you."

Here Ada entered, carrying a tray, on which was an under-done chop, some boiled potatoes, part of a rice pudding, burned at the top, and some stewed plums. She set it down before him. He eyed it with dislike. A bewildered wasp buzzed across the tray and fell into the fruit.

"I don't want anything. Take it away again, if you don't mind. Couldn't I have had cold meat and a cucumber, mother?"

"You shall, dear, next Saturday, of course. I wish we had thought of it. But just try now that nice juicy chop, just a bit of it," she urged coaxingly.

He shook his head, then leaned back uncomfortably against the piano and looked round the room critically. There were the green woollen table-cloth, the gilt looking-glass, the faded crimson rep chairs, the limp art-muslin twisted round the flower-pots in the wire stand near the window, the beaded fly-catcher hanging from the chandelier, the brown lava spill-cases on the mantel-piece.

The sun was blazing into the room, but as Jessie, in her tumbled white blouse and old black skirt, chose to sit on the window-ledge, nobody had thought of lowering the blinds.

"What funny people you all are!" he remarked at last.

"Why?" demanded Augusta, who had produced some scarlet ribbon and was tying bows on to the Japanese fans.

"Oh, because you seem to prefer being roasted when you might be cool, public when you might be private, and you seem to have saved all the rubbish from the old place and to have piled it up in here. That's the only decent thing in the room," he added, pointing to his father's portrait.

"How cross you are!" said Jessie.

"I am hot, dirty, and tired; yes, and perhaps cross. I will go up and change, mother. Don't wait for me, girls; I shall not play tennis this afternoon."

"Which means that Flora Moore is not coming, I suppose?" cried Augusta mischievously.

"Oh, don't tease your brother. I am sure he tries to be obliging, whether Flora is here or no. Are you really going upstairs, my boy? Come down as soon as you have changed."

"I have some work I want to do. I will come down at supper-time," he said, as he went out of the room.

"Well, I shall bring you up some tea at four o'clock, as you have had no dinner," his mother called after him.

"Thanks, that will be very nice," he called back again.

"I say, mother, he's awfully gone on Flora. Did you see his face?" cried Augusta, as soon as the door was shut.

"So silly of him. She is ever so well off; she won't marry *him*," declared Jessie.

"Why not? What on earth can a child like *you* know about it?" cried Ada, laughing.

"Quite as much as you," answered Jessie, tossing her head. "Money goes with money, and Flora Moore has lots of admirers besides Edward."

"None half so good-looking," declared Ada.

"And certainly not half so good; still I won't have him teased about her. Do you hear, girls?"

"Oh, yes, mother, dear, we hear; but why can't he talk about her openly, or stand a little chaff, as we do about Tom or Herbert? He shuts up and makes you feel you have broken the Ten Commandments if you only mention her name. I do it all the more, just to cure him."

"Oh, Gus, you should not do that. He can't alter his nature; we are not all made alike, you know," said Mrs. Hay.

"Here comes Tom King," announced Jessie once more from her post in the window; and the girls presently left the hot front room and with their mother adjourned to the back garden, the lemonade, and the shady seat by the water-butt.

While balls were flying, and "serves" and "scores" were being vehemently discussed on the sunburnt grass outside, Edward Hay sat at the table in his attic, poring over a German grammar. The air was stifling, the thinly built little house seemed to be baked through, the brass door-handle was hot to the touch, the bedroom candle drooped downward from the candlestick on to the mantel-piece. Wasps were crawling on the window-panes. Next door somebody was practising Beethoven's Sonatas; a train was letting off steam in the station, the smoke travelled in and filled the room. In the open drawer of his table lay the precious "History of the County Families." Books filled a rough shelf which ran all round the room, chiefly German, French, and Spanish.

After a time there was a knock at the door,—all the family knew his dislike to being interrupted,—and thinking it was his mother with the tea, he cried "Come in!"

"Oh, Jessie, is it you? I don't think you had better stay up here; it is too hot," he said, without closing his book.

Jessie sat down on his low bedstead.

"I want to ask your advice," she said.

"About what? A new hat or a new lover?" he asked, laughing.

"Don't be stupid. I want to earn some money."

Her brother gave a long whistle, and went on making notes in pencil on a strip of paper.

"Why do you whistle? What is to hinder me?" she demanded impatiently.

He turned round, clasped his hands on the back of his chair, and stared at her good-naturedly.

"I believe you are actually in earnest," he said.

"Of course I am ; but I don't know how to begin."

"What do you want money for, my dear girl?"

"Oh, I don't know. I think it is more for the interest of the thing than for the money. I am tired of being here."

"You can't earn money, you know, without working pretty hard ; you have never been used to do anything but amuse yourself."

"I know. I should only do it for a time, just for the fun of it."

"No good work is done in that spirit," he said, sighing.

"I don't care about doing good work ; I only want a change."

"Why, then, you little goose, as soon as you got tired of that you would want another change, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," she answered, clasping her hands behind her head and leaning back against the wall.

"How odd girls are ! We men can't afford to feel like that. It is awfully bad for you not to stick to something."

"Don't preach."

At this he turned round to his book again.

Jessie sat still and stared at him. Presently she said :

"I suppose you are saving up every penny to get married with?" Receiving no answer she went on : "Now, can't you see how uneven things are ? You have an object for saving and working. I have none. All my saving and honest toil would never give me the right to ask the man I love to marry me."

He turned round again and looked at her, then said slowly:

"That is true enough. But why should you not work and save, apart from that ? I should think any fellow would rather marry a girl who showed she was capable of self-denial and application, than a mere feather-headed, well-got-up doll."

"Should you ? Dear me, then, I wonder you are so set upon Flora Moore," she returned saucily.

The dull red crept over his forehead.

"I don't think there is any occasion for you to be impertinent, Jessie. Let us go on discussing your ideas of work," he said stiffly.

"Well, if I find out where to go, will you lend me the money if I have to pay anything for learning, say in a hospital?"

"No ; I never lend, but if you are really in earnest, and mother has no objection, I will give it to you."

"Why should you *give* it, Neddy ? I could pay it back."

"Yes, if you were in earnest you could, but I don't think you are. If I give it, then it will not be my concern what you do with it. If I lend it, every careless act of yours would be an annoyance to me."

"You are right, I dare say. When can I have the money ?"

"My dear Jess, what a hurry you are in ! It will take me much longer to make it, I expect, than it will take you to spend it."

"I dare say," she assented, clasping her hands round her knee, and swaying to and fro on the edge of the bed.

Her brother remained with his arm over the back of his chair and his chin leaning on it.

Another train shrieked past; smoke again curled slowly through the thick atmosphere and into the room.

"Those beastly trains !" muttered Edward Hay.

"Oh, they are not bad. I rather like them," answered Jessie.

There was another long silence.

"What sort of thing do you want to do ?" he asked at last.

"I want to go as a stewardess on board some ship, going as far as ever it can go."

He burst out laughing.

"They won't take a child like you ; you are years too young, I expect. Think of something else."

From a very battered little purse Jessie produced a cutting from a newspaper and proceeded to read it aloud to him. It

stated that a colonel's wife, about to winter abroad with her children, was anxious to find a superior young person, fond of children, to help her.

"I'm a superior young person. I'm fond of children. I'm going," declared Jessie, laughing.

Her brother looked dubious.

"Mother won't like it," he said.

"Come, be honest ; say at once that *you* don't like it. You think it is beneath our family dignity for me to earn money in such a manner, don't you?"

"You would not earn much ; only twenty-five pounds a year and your washing," he quoted from the paper she had handed him.

"Oh, I told you the money is the least part of it. Look here, do you see that?" and Jessie kicked off one of her well-worn shoes, which she sent flying across the room and which hit the opposite wall. Then she stuck out for his inspection a small foot with an enormous hole in the heel of the stocking. "*Now*, do you see why it is high time I went away and had some sort of responsibility?"

"No, I am afraid I don't, Jess. Explain."

"Well, look here; I just don't feel it matters a straw what I do, or do not, here; whether I have holes in my stockings or not. I don't like reading. Mother keeps house. I'm not keen on tennis or parishes, like Ada and Gus. There does not happen to be a Tom or a Herbert pining to marry me, and making all these horrid little roads seem glorified to me for their sakes. If I stay on here much longer I shall get careless about a lot of things that matter much more than a hole in my stocking. So I am going to that colonel's wife, and you are going to give me thirty pounds, and I am going to keep it before me as a sacred duty to pay it back. And you will feel you have saved me from becoming like that awful Chandernagore girl, who is going silly because she has never had anything to do."

Edward Hay got up and leaned out of the little window.

The paint of the frame was hot and blistered; a water-cart was passing below in the stony road. Two and two, all up the road, the dusty young chestnuts drooped in the glare of the afternoon sun. At the red pillar-box there was a cross road; in it were more pairs of trees, and more red-bricked villas. Beyond them, at some distance, was a thick mass of foliage, surrounding a square white house. It was the vicarage belonging to the largest church in the neighborhood. Flora Moore lived there.

"Well, when are you going to speak to me? Don't get into one of your absent moods, Neddie, there's a dear," implored Jessie, as she got up, fetched her shoe, and came and stood beside him. She supported herself by holding his arm, while she balanced herself on one foot and put her shoe on to the other.

Her brother drew his head in from the window, saying :

"I am not absent, Jess ; I was only thinking over what you have just said to me. I wish you would leave off calling me Neddie. I suppose many girls must feel as you do. I never thought of it before. It seems all wrong, somehow, that anyone should go melancholy, like that poor girl at Chander-nagore, just through having nothing to do. I suppose you are right. If I were rich I should buy you a horse to ride, and perhaps you would feel different. But we are so poor that, as you want a change, you must earn it. The only drawback to your idea is that it does not lead on to anything else. Those children will grow up, and then they will not require you."

"Goosey, of course not. Don't you see that going out with those people is only step one? Step two will be that when they come back to England I shall not come, but stay out there in a school and learn French in return for English ; and then—oh, who knows? Something will turn up. And, meanwhile, I shall have found it necessary to mend my stockings."

They both laughed, and, standing on tiptoe, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"You are really rather a good Neddy. Oh, I forgot you hate being called that. Flora will be lucky; but you are far too good for her."

He returned her caress gravely, but, as usual whenever that name was mentioned, he said nothing.

"Don't *you* want to go abroad, Edward? You ought to go. Why, to judge by all these books, I should think you know a lot of languages already, don't you?"

"None perfectly; but I intend to travel some day. I have only the evenings at my own disposal, and——"

"Saturday afternoons, when discontented sisters take up all your time," she interrupted.

"I am glad to have been of use to you. Now, you had better go down and tell mother, and write your letter at once," he said, as he opened the door for her.

"Well, I am awfully obliged to you. I hope you'll find somebody to help you as nicely in your hour of despair."

"Despair!" he repeated. "What a big word for such an ordinary sensation as discontent! 'Despair!' What a big word to be uttered in such a commonplace, modern little house!"

"Ah, but it's not uttered about a commonplace, modern little man," she cried, laughing. "Why, if anything awful happened to you, you would not merely have an hour's grumble such as I have had, it would be like an earthquake in your life. And when that happens may I be well out of the way, that's all."

"There, my dear girl, leave off talking heroics," he cried, retreating into his room. He repeated Jessie's words to himself as he changed his coat: "'These horrid little roads seem glorified for their sakes.' I suppose I know what she means." And he again went to the window and stood long looking across to the vicarage.

CHAPTER II

ADA KING stood jogging her baby up and down at the drawing-room window of Dr. King's villa. She and Tom King had been married about four years. They lived with her father-in-law, a widower. The Kings had a very good practice between them, and Ada's home was larger and much better furnished than Byron Villa in the adjacent road, where her mother still lived.

Again it was summer and a Saturday afternoon. The window was open, and the baby made vigorous but unavailing efforts to clutch the golden laburnum that the slight wind was blowing now toward, now away from him. His mother continued to jog him up and down, crooning snatches of "Robin Adair."

Presently, round the corner, swift, determined footsteps were heard. Ada King paused in her song and held the child arrested at arms' length while she listened.

"Edward!" she cried. "I thought it must be you. How nice! No time to come in? Well, never mind; stand there and look at your nephew, and tell me the news. Did mother hear from Jess last night? and has she found anybody to give the new kitten to?"

"The Chandernagore children have got the kitten, and Jess wrote by this mail. Here is the letter for you. Allow me to offer my usual remark that matrimony agrees with you. Here, give me the boy. Come to me, old chap."

"He simply loves you to take him; next to Tom, of course. I'm glad I am not growing too utterly hideous. Fat girls like me often do, you know. I say, Edward, don't let him eat that laburnum blossom. Can't he have your watch to play with?"

"Jess seems very jolly, doesn't she?" asked Edward Hay,

as, swinging his nephew on to his shoulder, he watched his sister glancing rapidly over the thin foreign letter he had given her.

"Gracious ! What does she mean by this absurd message to you : 'Tell Edward I darn all my stockings most religiously, and feel sure I shall ever continue to wish to do so ' ? "

Her brother laughed and answered :

"Oh, only a little joke she and I had before she went away."

"Who would have thought India would be her next destination ? Our little Jess right hand to those nice people ever since she answered that advertisement ! Awfully plucky of her ! I see she says she has received those books she asked you to send out to her. Jess used not to be any more *booky* than Gus or I. Of course you are the only really clever one in our family. How amusing of her to think of coming back to train as a hospital nurse ! Just what she always wanted to be. Well, I suppose I may keep this letter to show to Tom ? "

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," said her brother, somewhat absently.

Mrs. King regarded him admiringly as he took a step to the gate, hoisting the boy high up that he might clutch the red roses growing on the wire archway over it.

"Guess who has been to see me this afternoon," she demanded, when she had feasted her affectionate eyes sufficiently on her brother and her child.

"Who ? " he cried, without turning his head.

"Herbert Moore. He only arrived last night. He tells me he likes his curacy immensely, and he asked me to tell you he hopes you will go up there to-morrow afternoon : he wants to see you. Oh, and that Colonel Green is staying at the vicarage again."

This time there was no answer from the gate. Ada King sighed.

"Gus is going up to tea there to-morrow. You might walk up together," she remarked.

"I am on my way there now," said her brother.

"Oh, are you, dear? Well, then, give me the boy, and don't stop another minute. Oh, you beauty don't you just love to pull uncle's hair with your fat fist?"

Edward Hay approached the window and handed the child in to its mother. Then, smoothing down his ruffled hair, he put on his hat, which he had taken off for the baby's convenience, and looked at his sister's beaming face as though he were about to speak. Her happiness was infectious; he smiled at her.

"Edward—oh, my dear, I do believe you have something good to tell me. Is it—oh, is it anything to do with the partnership? Tell me quick. Has uncle said anything about it?"

"Yes, he has."

"Oh, how lovely! What does mother say?"

"I have not told her yet. I shall tell her to-night. Poor old Reggie! If he had not died I should never have had this offer—at any rate not for years to come."

"Oh, yes, you would. Cousin Reg never was good at business; I have often heard uncle say so himself. Besides, I should think he would have been only too thankful to keep you with him, anyway; so clever, so steady, and knowing such a lot about languages and drawing. And so frightfully good-looking, too!"

He burst out laughing.

"Sisterly partiality. Don't forget that your brother is only a grave old business man, after all."

"He *happens* to be; but he is fit to be in any profession, which is better than being in a profession and only fit to be a business man. Besides, I don't know why you say '*only* a business man,' for people's callings don't matter much. It is what they are themselves that matters; that is what father used to say, I'm sure."

Her brother smiled at her vehemence. "Well, good-by," he said.

"Oh, stop. I say, Edward, may I tell Tom?"

He hesitated—a very unusual thing with him.

"Can't you wait?" he asked.

"Of course; but what for?" she said, in a disappointed voice.

"Till I give you leave. There, there, perhaps only till to-night," he cried joyously, as he kissed his hand to the crowing baby and went out at the gate.

He turned back and leaned over it as though he would say more. But after watching her a moment he strode away up the road.

Ada King left the window suddenly, with an irritated gesture; she put the child down on the floor with some toys, and sat down to her sewing. Presently her husband came in. She did not rush to greet him, as was her wont, but sat still with her eyes on her work. He came up to her, put his hand under her chin, and turned her face upward. Her eyes were full of tears.

"What's up?" he demanded.

The tears ran over, and between laughing and crying she said:

"Oh, Tom! Edward has just gone up to the vicarage to propose to Flora Moore, and of course she won't have him. Isn't it awful?"

Tom King drew up a chair beside her and sat down.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"From his manner. He has just been here. I always hoped something would happen before he had the chance to do it." And Mrs. King dried her eyes vigorously.

"It was bound to come," declared her husband. "What an ass he is to have been taken in by that plausible, pretty little flirt all these years!"

"I wish Gus had never had her for a friend; I am sure she only put up with her because she was so fond of Herbert.

And now we can't cut her as I should like to do. I begin to wish Gus and Herbert weren't engaged at all, I declare I do."

"Oh, rubbish! Herbert is a very good fellow; he and Gus are right enough. And as for dear old Ned, he must just get over this as many a better man has had to do before him."

"But, Tom, dear, *why* should not Flora like him? She has got money, and Edward is not a pauper, and will soon be in a very good position."

"My dear child, have you not discovered yet that girls like Flora Moore only like us men as an audience? They are not capable of liking us as individuals. Just think what an audience Ned has been to her all this time, noticing every trick of her dress and actions and words, always adoring, always ready at every moment when she did not happen to have anyone else, thankful for a glance, drunk with a careless word of approbation, simply grovelling on receiving the most empty confidence. Why, the poor chap has been making a perfect spectacle of himself, and I for one am thankful he is going to be shut out of his fool's paradise once and forever."

"But, dear, it's perfectly disgusting that she should never get a rap on the knuckles herself. It will be a most awful blow to Edward, and she won't suffer a bit."

"Not a bit," returned her husband cheerfully, as he stooped to set up some wooden ninepins his boy was playing with.

"Well, I think she is an odious little toad, in spite of her scents and her curls and her lovely clothes!" declared Mrs. King, thrusting her handkerchief vehemently back into her pocket. "Edward will never be the same again. Suppose I had pinned all my faith on to you, and you had gone and married somebody else, I should simply have died."

"Oh, pooh! Nonsense, my dear child."

"I should," she persisted, "if you had led me on as Flora has led Edward. And he is not like me; he is really romantic, and I am not; so I expect he has woven webs of extra

glory round that wicked little thing. And he is so silent ; he will just suffer and suffer, all to himself."

"It is a nasty business. I am afraid Flora is a tolerably bad lot. I pity the man who saddles himself with her in the end. Poor old Ned ! Never mind, Ada ; he will find somebody else some day, when he has got over this, and be a better man in the long run, too."

"It is a horrid process to have to go through before you can be 'a better man,'" bemoaned Mrs. King. "I'm sure I have talked to him about the visits of that elderly widower, Colonel Green, enough to have opened the eyes of anyone less infatuated than Edward."

"Instructive sight ! Circe and her victims in the garden of a respectable, moneyed, suburban vicar ! I think you and I had better step up to-morrow and look at them."

"Who was Circe, Tom, dear ?"

"An ancestor of Flora Moore's."

"Oh, I suppose, then, it is in the family to behave like that ?"

"I suppose so. No, by Jove ! It is a shame to take you in. I'll tell you all about Circe another time. I wish you would step up to the cricket-ground with me now, if you have nothing better to do."

Mrs. King flew to get ready, and her brother's affairs went out of her head for a few hours.

Meanwhile Edward Hay, striding along the dusty roads, arrived speedily at the vicarage gate.

The neat carriage-drive was bordered on either side by bushes of evergreen ; through the bushes, on the right, was a path leading on to a trim lawn, laid out with flower-beds, and bare of all trees except one ash of quite respectable dimensions. In the shade of this tree a wicker tea-table was spread, and lying back in a luxurious lounging-chair was a very beautiful girl ; on the grass beside her lay a youth gazing up into her face, and on the other side a middle-aged man sat, holding in his hands, and feeding with cake, a fine King Charles, with a blue ribbon round its neck.

At the tea-table presided a young man in clerical dress, bearing on his honest, bright countenance a slight resemblance to the girl.

It was this group that Edward Hay saw as he came out of the path on to the lawn. In an instant he marked the soft folds of the dress that swept over the low lounge on to the grass, the glitter of the rings on the delicate hand, the frill of lace that hung from it as it reached out for a teacup, and the shape of the dark head resting against the white embroidered satin cushion. There did not seem to him to be anything in the garden except that one bewildering form, and the sweet laugh that met his ears seemed full of the promise of joy for him as her voice said :

"Ah, here comes Edward Hay."

"Well done, Ned, old man ; how good it is to see you again !" cried the young clergyman heartily ; and Herbert Moore got up and came forward. "Green you know, and this is Daisy Moore, a cousin. I believe there is a tradition that he was christened Godfrey, but he has always been called Daisy, probably on account of his extreme dissimilarity to that simple and innocent flower."

"I won't have my Daisy sat upon," said the girl in a low sweet voice ; "he reads poetry divinely, and carries all my parcels when I go into the district. I shall miss you dreadfully, Daisy, when the Long is over and you go up again to cram more wisdom into your nice, ugly head. No, Edward, no more cake, thank you. Colonel Green has been offering that plate to me regularly every three minutes since four o'clock."

"You took some every time, so I considered I was doing right," returned Colonel Green, looking straight at her.

"Yes, oh, yes, certainly, but there comes an end at last to all sweet things," she replied lazily. "For instance, I want you to move and let Mr. Hay have your chair by me. Come here, Edward, and tell me what you think of my new photographs."

Colonel Green rose, deposited the dog on his mistress' lap and, going to the table, helped himself to strawberries.

Herbert Moore tilted his chair on to its back legs, and leaning back, clasped his hands behind his head and began to talk to his cousin. Colonel Green listened a while, then said :

"Daisy, do you feel inclined to take my boy on the Continent for a month?"

Daisy Moore got up from the grass, a surprised, pleased look on his face, and sauntered up to the table.

"I'm not exactly as fresh as a daisy, as Herbert said just now. Will you trust him with me?"

Colonel Green laughed.

"Come and walk round the garden, and have a smoke and talk it over," he said.

As they walked away, Herbert Moore glanced at his sister and his friend, then said :

"Well, Flora, I'm going down to the cricket-field. You will stay and dine, Ned, of course ; my father will like to see you."

Then he too walked away, and Edward Hay found himself alone with Flora Moore. It seemed to him quite natural that everybody should have left them alone together under the ash-tree ; it seemed to him that she had waited behind because it was sweet to her to be with him. He sat in a state of such excitement that he feared to trust himself to speak. He watched her hand smoothing the dog's head—the dog he had given her ; he watched the long curled eye-lashes as they lay on her cheek ; he watched the rings of her dark hair as they lay on her forehead ; he had learned the pattern of the lace on her handkerchief, stuck in her waistband in company with a bunch of white roses ; and he had marked the beautiful shape of her daintily shod feet. The curled lashes slowly raised themselves, and she fixed her eyes upon his face.

"Do not let me keep you ; everybody except us seems to have gone to the cricket-field. I find it too hot."

"I wish to stay," he managed to say.

"Ah, yes ; you always are so oppressively self-denying. Now, with such a face as yours, you could afford to be as disagreeable as you liked. How is your uncle, and that clever, bustling aunt of yours ?"

He told her, then laid before her his good news about the partnership.

"Dear me, how very interesting ! You will be able to leave business soon, I suppose—when you have saved enough, I mean—and be something else, will you not ?"

"Leave business !" he echoed. "Why ? What else could I start doing at my age ? Why should I leave business ?"

"Oh, because your father and your grandfather were in the Church, and your great-grandfather in the army. It is a pity you should come down," she said tranquilly, her lovely face covered with dimpling smiles.

"Come down !" he repeated. "I do not quite see that. We must move with the times. Great numbers of men go into business now, just as great numbers of women earn their own living ; the same class who fifty years ago would have done neither one nor the other."

"Dear me ! You are quite eloquent. Do not get excited. Of course we must move with the times ; that is why my father is a clergyman, whereas his father was only a brewer."

"The brewer earned the money to send his son to the university with ; the poor vicar had none, so his son has had to go into business."

"To make money that *his* son in the future may be able to follow a profession ; I see," she said, smiling up in his face.

At these words all his vehemence suddenly died away.

"You are glad to hear of my good fortune, at any rate, are you not, Flora ?" he asked in a low voice, bending toward her.

"Of course I am ; so will papa be. You must tell him at dinner. I wonder where Colonel Green and Daisy have gone to ? They are always so amusing."

He laid his hand upon hers.

"I want to talk to you, Flora," he said.

"Is not that just what you have been doing ever since the others left us?" she asked, yawning. Then, as he said nothing, she looked at him. "Now, *pray*, do not make love to me; you are the only man who has not done it yet," she said languidly.

"What else have I been doing all these years?" he demanded.

She laughed a laugh so lovely that, even in his excitement, he was conscious of wishing that she would prolong it. She looked at him out of those marvellously fringed eyes with cool daring and said:

"I suppose you are alluding to that far-away day when you were silly enough to ask me if I would wait for you, and I was obliging enough to say yes, unless I saw anyone that pleased me better?"

He stood towering over her, one hand leaning on the tea-table beside him, his eyes riveted on her face; he spoke in a low voice:

"Yes. I am alluding to that far-away day, as well as to a hundred others. Oh, Flora, do not play with me. You have always been so good to me. You have known that I could not speak before. I am in a position to do so now. You must listen to me."

"If I *must*, I must, I suppose," she said with a shrug of her shoulders; then, unfurling her fan, she settled her head more luxuriously against her cushion, and gently fanning herself, smiled up in his face and awaited what he had to say.

He stood there and poured out to her his hopes of years, his plans for the future—her future and his. He waxed eloquent; he lavished upon her all the endearing names that had for years lain ready in his heart for her. She never interrupted him, but continued throughout to listen and, in an intermittent manner, to fan herself.

He ceased at last, his strong voice sinking almost to a

whisper from the excess of his feelings. It was quite still in the garden. An audacious sparrow hopped up, picked up a crumb of cake that had fallen on the grass, and flew with it in his beak on to a lilac bush near by.

"Look at him ; sparrows are always so daring," said Flora Moore in her silvery voice, pointing with her lace-ruffled hand.

"What?" he asked bluntly.

"I only said sparrows are always so daring; less plebeian birds have more modesty."

"I don't understand you. Oh, Flora, how can you attend to anything else in such a moment as this? You have heard all I have been saying. Be serious, my sweet one, and answer me."

"My dear Edward, do I understand you seriously to mean that you have been making me an offer of marriage? Because you know really it is very foolish of you. Even the dullest man, and you are not dull, must have taken to heart my abuse of business men all these years. I am sure I have told you a hundred times that nothing would induce me to marry a man in business. Have I not?" she persisted, leaning forward and tapping his hand with her fan, as though to arouse him from the rigid stare he was fixing on her.

"Yes, you have," he assented mechanically. "People often say that foolish sort of thing. I paid no attention to it. You do not really mean it now?"

"But I do mean it. You have always been the dearest fellow to have about, and papa is so fond of you. I am sure it is natural you should have been coming here so often to see me. Why, I was only a child when I first knew you. Besides, you are only one of many. When a girl does not happen to be too dreadfully ugly, of course there are always heaps of men to say pretty things to her. Do not stand glaring at me like that, but take your dismissal as a lover and retain my acquaintance as a friend."

"I do not understand you," he said hoarsely. "Are you telling me that you will not marry me?"

"Yes, my dear, dense Edward, I am telling you that I will not marry you."

He fell down on the grass, spread his arms over her, and buried his face in the folds of her dress. He shook all over, but he did not speak.

Flora Moore's eyebrows went up. She shut her fan impatiently.

"I should have thought you would have had more self-control," she remarked. He made no movement. "Don't kneel there, Edward; you look like the pictures in Sunday-school books of pious young men praying, or husbands at their wives' death-beds. Get up!"

He did not seem to hear her.

Presently she leaned forward and put her hand on his head and watched complacently her white fingers straying in his brown curls.

"Silly man, to take it to heart!"

A shudder shook him.

"You have been the mainspring of my life," he said in a broken voice. "I suppose I am not good enough for you. You would not have married me even if I had had a profession."

"Oh, yes, I dare say I should," she said cheerfully. "I always thought you were going to give up business. But, as we have been having such a very intimate talk together, I don't mind telling you, what is a secret at present, that I am engaged to Colonel Green."

He started up and again stood beside her. His face was white and stern.

"Since when?" he demanded in a loud voice.

"Let me see," she said, clasping her hands behind her head and knitting her brows; "let me see; since about a year, I think."

"*A year?* And you have let me come and go all that time, knowing that I considered you practically engaged to me?"

She nodded, smiling.

"Yes, about a year."

He turned away and strode up the lawn.

Flora Moore rose, shook out her dress, readjusted her roses, yawned, and, sitting down on the side of the lounge, picked up her hat and began pulling out its lace bows. From time to time she glanced at the tall, broad-shouldered man at the other end of the garden.

"He will come back," she said to herself. "What a pity he takes things so seriously! He really looked extremely handsome while he was proposing. I think I should have stopped him if he had looked ugly. The very idea of *me* being buried in some villa a degree or two larger than Dr. King's, or some unfashionable, eminently respectable, but deadly dull terrace in town! What vanity these men have!"

She tied on her hat, pulled her curls out afresh on her forehead, then, stretching out her hand to the table, she daintily dipped a lump of sugar into the cream and held it out for the King Charles to beg for.

The dog sat up, the girl bent forward, the sun shone full over her lovely face and lit up the jewels that clasped her throat and that flamed from her finger. She smiled at the dog and talked lovingly to him, in her caressing voice.

"Do you feel better?" she asked winsomely, looking up at Edward Hay as he at last drew near.

He stopped a few paces from her. He looked long at her. His eyes were full of tears, his voice was full of misery, as he said at last very slowly:

"How beautiful you are!"

She laughed, drew the white roses from her belt, and tossed them to him.

"There's for your pretty speech, which, though it lacks originality, proves you want to make peace."

The roses fell at his feet unheeded, his eyes were still fixed on her.

"How beautiful you are!" he repeated again, "and how

wicked ! I think you must be quite the wickedest girl that has ever been made."

"You are very rude, Edward."

"Am I ? I dare say," he replied with the same slow, painful utterance. "I wish you could die before you are able to do any more harm. I think I should not mind so much if I could think of you as really dead."

"What nonsense !" she cried impatiently. "I am going indoors. You had better go home."

"I am going. Good-by."

He stooped, picked up the roses, smoothed out their crushed petals, put them to his lips, and gently laid them beside her on the lounge. She watched him with a disdainful expression.

"Never mind those old roses, they are all faded now."

"They must not be trodden to pieces ; they are what *you* have worn," he said.

"You may take them with you, if you like ; something to remember your dead love by, and your uncivil speeches. You really have been very rude, you know. Confess that I have been very good to forgive you so easily."

He drew his hand wearily across his eyes, as if he were dreaming.

"*You* good ? Do you know, when I think of you, as I know I shall do, I shall always think of you as a devil. I think you must be the sort of creature that tempts a man to kill you, and then to kill himself out of contempt for having done it."

Flora Moore ceased to smile.

"I am sure, if you feel so wicked as that, it will be only right for us not to see any more of you. I had no idea you had such an ungovernable temper. I must really beg that you will not come up here to-morrow with Gus, or indeed at all, for the present."

"It is my one prayer that I may never see your face again."

She got up and stood facing him.

"Shake hands ; we need not part in anger," she urged.

"What ? You would stoop to be friendly with me after all I have been saying ? It is not good nature that prompts you ; it is your vanity, it is of a piece with all the rest. And yet"—here the scorn in his voice died out—"and yet, oh, how beautiful you are ! Why should you be so false ?"

"Poor fellow !" she said gently, as she put her hand on his arm, "you do not look so violent now ; I will relent ; you may come and see me to-morrow, if you like."

He shook off her hand.

"You do not understand what you have done, not even yet. I begin to think you never will. I am going now."

He picked up his hat and stick, then remained looking at her long and silently, as she stood there in her white dress in the sunshine, her scarlet lips apart with a little disdainful smile. For the space of a long moment, which seemed to him an hour, they remained thus, looking at each other, then, with a heavy sigh, he turned and went slowly away out of the garden, leaving her standing smiling under the ash-tree.

Not many days afterward, when he was writing some letters in the office, his uncle passed through in conversation with a tall thin man. Edward Hay glanced at him, struck by his distinguished bearing and the quick, keen glances he cast around him.

"Well, well," he was saying, "I have had more time to devote to books, it is true, than you have, but, my dear fellow, do not forget that 'They do most by books who could do much without them ; and he that chiefly owes himself unto himself is the substantial man.'"

Edward Hay recognized the quotation, and for a moment he once more breathed in the old loved atmosphere of his father's study.

"Who is that ?" he asked, when his uncle returned from seeing his friend to the door.

"Mr. Thornborough of Meads. As lads we were at the

same school for a short time. He gets all he wants at Lawson's. He doesn't often come to town, but he generally looks in to see me. A fine example of a country gentleman, Edward. Though his life is so different, yet he knows more about our business than many men who are in it. I value his friendship highly."

His nephew went on with the French letter he was answering. There were, then, people who did not estimate men in business as Flora Moore did, people like Mr. Thornborough.

Part III

IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

"Quelle race d'hommes ! quels types admirables ! La race basque est étrêmement remarquable par la beauté de son type, qui, grâce à la rareté des croisements, s'est conservé avec une pureté surprenante. . . Un Montmorency disait à l'un d'eux : 'Savez-vous que nous datons de mille ans ?' 'Et nous,' répondit le Basque, 'nous ne comptons plus.' . . Le Basque a vu toutes les nations passer devant lui ; nos jeunes antiquités lui font pitié."

CHAPTER I

"It is a very pleasant proposal. I should scarcely have given Meakin credit for so clear and well-arranged a plan," declared Dan Thornborough, passing the letter to his sister.

She adjusted her glasses, read it through, then passed it to her niece.

"My turn next, please," laughed Gideon, who was sitting opposite to his cousin.

"We shall all have time to finish our breakfast before Sarah has sufficiently revelled in the plan to allow her to speak," said his uncle.

"I think, now that Sarah has attained to the age of eighteen years, her mind might be capable of benefitting by the sight of a foreign country," announced Aunt Rachel. "Pass your uncle's cup, Gideon, if you please."

"I conclude it is on the cards that Sarah is to go abroad with the Meakins, isn't it, Uncle Dan ?"

"There, read it," cried Sarah, sticking the letter into the toast-rack and pushing it across the broad space of white cloth between them. "Read the end part, Gideon, it is about you going ; the first part is only about me."

"I consider it an act of unprecedented folly for Mabel to

take the children. Home is the only suitable place for babies of five years of age," remarked Miss Thornborough.

"But Mabel intends to stay away three or four months, Aunt Rachel. Percy can't stop, of course. Gideon and I are only asked for a short time. Mabel tells us so on the second page, where she says there are sure to be people returning for me to travel with. That would not be necessary, of course, as Gideon would be with me."

"Your uncle and I cannot permit that, my dear," said Miss Thornborough, looking meaningly at her brother.

"Can't permit what?" demanded Sarah.

"Bosh!" ejaculated Gideon, under his breath.

"Oblige me, Sarah, by fetching the green manuscript-book—the one labelled 'Foreign,'" said their uncle.

"Let me go," cried Gideon, starting up.

But Sarah was already at the door.

"I think the question of the return journey may be with safety deferred till the time comes," said Dan Thornborough, as he leisurely spread his marmalade.

"Oh, certainly," assented his sister. "I only mean that Sarah is so wild; it is the more necessary that you and I should take counsel concerning her."

"True, Rachel, most true; we will continue to do so as occasion may require."

Gideon said nothing. He was cutting spiced beef at the sideboard. The season was the end of January, and Christmas fare still lingered in old-fashioned Meads.

Gideon Leigh was paying dearly for his latest piece of sport. At the end of the previous term he had gone duck-shooting with a man from his college. The weather had been so unusually severe that they had left even their dogs behind. Late into the inclement night they stayed out in a wild, marshy spot. Stiff and soaked through they managed to get home. His friend was none the worse, but Gideon had, for the first time in his life, taken to his bed, and there lay racked with such aches and pains that it was not till the New Year

that he was able to travel to Meads, where he was slowly recovering.

Bearing all this in mind, Dan Thornborough remarked, as his nephew sat down again:

"I would go if I were you ; Percy seems to think the sun will burn the cold out of you. The spring is inclement in England, and more especially here, and your joints seem to me to require oiling still."

"They do," laughed Gideon. "I shall have to miss a term, but I suppose I had better go. I cannot carry a gun even yet, and the two Georges had to hoist me up yesterday when I rode over to my father's with Sarah. Did they tell you?"

"Ay, they told me. Shall you object to Percy as a travelling companion?"

"Lord, no. His fussiness is of real use abroad; he has the courage of his convictions. When we were in the Engadine last summer, we got on like a house on fire. I believe he learns his guide-book by heart before he starts—prices, weights, measures, and all. No, Percy is a trifle of a bore when at home, but he is not to be despised when abroad."

Here Sarah returned, and laying down the green manuscript-book beside her uncle, she kissed the top of his head and demanded :

"What does Percy mean by 'Euscarra,' and how on earth does he expect us to enjoy ourselves in a place where we can't talk?"

"Sit down, Sarah; your egg and your tea are already cold, and, my dear, how loudly you speak. You often quite make me start."

"I am sorry, Aunt Rachel, but really I think you should be accustomed to me by now," said her niece, laughing. "It is all your fault; you have helped me to grow up so strong that of course I talk loudly."

"Silence!" commanded Gideon. "When Uncle Dan opens that green book let us be all ears, as when we were

infants. He is about to answer your terrible craving for knowledge.

“ ‘ But if the first Eve
Hard doom did receive,
When only one apple had she,
What a punishment new,
Shall be found out for you,
Who, tasting, have robbed the whole tree ? ’ ”

He nodded at his cousin with mock gravity as he repeated the verse.

“ Well, I have not nearly robbed the whole tree yet. I only asked Uncle Dan what ‘ Euscarra ’ was, and you want to know too, only you are such a lazy boy, you like me to find out, and then tell you ; it saves you trouble.”

“ You have said it. The case stands just so. Proceed, instruct us, Uncle Dan.”

Miss Thornborough looked doubtfully at him.

“ I fear,” she said, “ those lines are rather irreverent ; are they not, Gideon ? Such light mention of our first parents should be discouraged. And though Sarah is so frequently to blame, I cannot, in this instance, censure her very proper desire for understanding her brother-in-law’s letter.”

Dan Thornborough had been turning over the leaves of the old extract-book ; he had found what he wanted, and now waited with his finger on the line of writing. He observed now his nephew, now his niece, an amused, interested look on his face, and before Gideon could answer his aunt, he began :

“ I have here some passages which I have copied from time to time about the remarkable people among whom you will shortly be thrown. Just sit five minutes while I read them to you :

“ ‘ The “ Euscarra ” is the proper term for a certain speech or language supposed to have been at one time prevalent throughout Spain, but which is at present confined to certain districts, both on the French and Spanish side of the Pyrenees, which are laved by the waters of the Cantabrian Gulf,

or Bay of Biscay. This language is commonly known as the Basque, or Biscayan, which words are mere modifications of the word "Euscarra," the consonant B having been prefixed for the sake of euphony.'

"Then here is a translation from another work on the subject of those interesting people. Notice the marked traits which separate them from their most intimate neighbors in France and Spain: 'Their patriarchal character, their nautical tastes, their gayety stamped with melancholy, their sweetness and their irascibility, their prejudice against all persons and things unfamiliar to them, their sobriety, their courage, their disdain of money, their ardent love of independence. Who were the ancestors of this strange people? Whence did they come? Are they the remainder of the inhabitants of Atlantis, mentioned by Plato; Atlantis, that great island next to the Pillars of Hercules, whence the inhabitants might so easily have passed to the mainland before the earthquake engulfed it? Or are they the remains of a migration of a people from the North commanded by Attila? Or are they descended from those masters of navigation, the Phœnicians, whose king, Hiram, lent Solomon his fleet to go to Ophir (that country which, after the discovery of America, was believed to be Peru) to fetch the gold with which Israel decorated the sanctuary of the Temple at Jerusalem?'

"There is a great deal more, but I will not detain you. The Spaniards say that Satan once lived seven years in the Basque country, hoping to learn their tongue, but left baffled at the end of that period, declaring that he did not believe they understood it themselves.

"Very strange," said Dan Thornborough, leaning back in his chair and looking at his listeners; "very strange and of deep interest. I have always desired to visit those people myself."

"It is awfully interesting. Why not come with us, now? Do!" cried Gideon.

But his uncle shook his head, and closing the green manuscript-book, he got up from the breakfast table with it under his arm, and clasping his hands behind him, he slowly walked out of the room.

"He did that last year when I asked him to come to Switzerland with Meakin and me," grumbled Gideon. "Why won't he ever go abroad, Aunt Rachel?"

"Ah, my dear boy, that has to do with what happened in his life long before you or Sarah were born. Your uncle dislikes all reference to it. I should be glad of your assistance, Sarah, in the workroom, where I have directions to give to Susan."

"I'll come. And look here, Gideon," she added, as her aunt left the room, "you just go to Uncle Dan and help him settle about dates and tickets and things, and be ready for a prowling with me this afternoon. Uncle Dan is going to ride over to Gray's Wick, so he won't want us."

"What is he going to Gray's Wick for?"

"To talk business with Mr. Gray."

"Gray? Is that poor little idiot chap dead at last?"

"Yes, and the new heir is there now."

"What do you think of him?"

"Oh, you must often have heard people speak of him; you know more than I."

"I do. But I asked what *you* thought."

"I like him," declared Sarah; "he is very clever."

"Just like you; you always do think such a heap of fellows who run after books," he returned irritably.

"Books *and* horses *and* dogs *and* shooting *and* fifty other things," laughed Sarah.

"Gray is a puppy!"

"A pretty elderly dorg," she drawled, imitating an acquaintance.

Her cousin laughed in spite of his annoyance.

"Look here, Sarah, Gray of Gray's Wick is not the sort of man for you to know."

"Then it is very bad for you to know him either, and I shall tell Uncle Dan what you say, and ask him to forbid you going over to Gray's Wick to play billiards. And it is quite the best table about here. You should see it. But no, you must not ; I must protect you from dangerous associations, dear boy."

"Oh, Sarah, do be serious. Well, if you won't stop—— I say, of course I will go out with you all this afternoon," he shouted after her.

"All right," he heard her cry, as she rushed down the long passage leading to the workroom and banged a door behind her.

Miss Thornborough was sitting before a bale of gray flannel. Susan Frant and a housemaid stood in front of her, awaiting orders. The flannel was to be cut up for the yearly needs of an orphanage which for generations the Thornboroughs had supported in the town.

"Look at this great bale, child ; we cannot move it. What can Houseman mean by sending it up here uncut ? It is the fault of that new man of his, I suppose. I fully intended, with Susan's help, to have had the dozen frocks cut out to take to the matron when I drive into the town after lunch," said Miss Thornborough in vexed tones.

Sarah stood considering.

"It is account morning, or I could stay and help," she said.

"Yes, my dear, and on no pretext whatever have I at any time permitted your uncle's hours to be interfered with."

"There is an hour yet," said her niece, consulting her watch. "You go at once and order dinner, and we three here will measure off the whole bale."

"Really, my dear, you are a great help. I must say that of late I have been considerably gratified by your readiness of spirit and by your practical assistance."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, you know I have always loved being in the thick of everything, only when I was small of course you very naturally did not consider me in my proper sphere."

Do you remember my coming down to dessert at that dinner in your new bonnet and cloak ? ”

Here the housemaid showed signs of giggling, but was suppressed by Susan Frant.

Miss Thornborough rose and answered, as she replaced her spectacles in the case that hung at her side :

“ I recollect perfectly, my dear, and I gave you for your punishment task a portion of the second canto of Sir Walter Scott’s beautiful poem, ‘ The Lady of the Lake. ’ ”

“ Of course you did, ” cried Sarah, laughing. “ Don’t you remember how I called Gideon ‘ Back, beardless boy, back Minion, ’ for months after ? But come, Susan, we must begin. Here, take the scissors ; you cut, I measure, Kate can fold up. ”

In their ramble over the frosty country that afternoon, Gideon and Sarah discussed the coming trip from every point of view. Every detail of a journey abroad was new to Sarah ; she had never been on a steamer, never attempted to speak in a foreign tongue—her uncle being of the opinion that no language could be satisfactorily learned save in the country where it was spoken. They were both in high spirits, and walked rapidly in the keen air. After a while Sarah slipped her arm through Gideon’s, and said confidentially :

“ Are you *very* sorry to have given up going into the army ? ”

He walked for some time hitting the hedge with his stick, and sending the snow flying off it on to the road.

“ Do you know why I did give it up ? ” he asked at last.

“ Not the faintest idea, dear boy, ” she said in her clear, strong young voice.

“ You never heard any discussion about Leigh Court or Meads ; never heard my father say anything to Uncle Dan ? ”

“ Never, ” she declared again.

“ Oh, well, then—— Oh, I say, Sarah, I wish I were twenty-one, ” and he began again to strike the hedges, pressing Sarah’s hand more closely against his side with his other arm.

"You have not long to wait ; only till the spring," she said, laughing. "What are you in such a hurry for?"

"Wasn't Gray consul out at some place or other? What a confounded nuisance of him to have inherited Gray's Wick! Who wants him here?" was Gideon's apparently irrelevant remark.

"What on earth has Mr. Gray to do with your coming of age?"

"Oh, Sarah, you are so dreadfully young," he said dolefully. She laughed.

"So are you, dear boy. But you have been a great puzzle ever since you came home ; what Susan calls '*quite touchy*.'"

"Not to you, Sarah, surely? I'm awfully sorry, anyway, but——"

He broke off, and his cousin suddenly withdrew her arm and snatched his stick out of his hand.

"There! Now you can't bang the poor hedges any more. I have not had an answer to any of my questions about the army, or your being twenty-one, or why Uncle Dan won't go abroad, or anything, and I don't mean to ask again. Poking my nose into other people's affairs is not one of my many virtues. I'm awfully glad you are coming abroad with me."

"Are you, truly, honor bright?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, dear boy, it shows you have not the least idea how much I miss you. Fancy your doubting that I am glad!"

He crossed to her side of the road, and put his arm through hers ; they fell into step and marched along for a few minutes without saying anything, Sarah dexterously tossing and catching his stick with her left hand, Gideon making grabs at it, and finally possessing himself of it.

Sarah thrust her hand deep into the pocket of her jacket, declaring her fingers were frozen, and then said composedly :

"I am so glad I am a farmeress ; look at all these acres of land. I suppose lots of girls would march all over it without having the least idea what was going to be put on it?"

"*Rather !*" said Gideon admiringly.

"You see there is Leigh Court for you to be interested in, and Meads for me. How jolly it is that we care about the same things ! What a huge boy Fred is growing ! But he is rather spoiled ; it is all Aunt Mary's doing. It makes Uncle Dol all the harder on him."

"By Jove, yes ! Fred is nearly fifteen. Spoiled ! Yes, worse luck. Poor chap ! he ought to have had Uncle Dan behind him all these years ; my father does not understand him."

"Well, I'm sure Fred is devoted to you ; he is lucky to have such a brother. But, do you know—— Don't tell anybody, promise."

"I promise."

"You know when he and I were at the eel-trap, and he fell in ?"

Gideon nodded.

"He cried—he actually *cried !*"

"Nonsense !"

"Poor boy ! he did ; the slime and mud were all over him, of course, and a great eel wriggled over his face in the rush of water, and I was laughing so much that I could not tell him that he was quite safe. I helped him out, and he sat down on the grass and simply blubbered. *We* never cried, not even when you gashed your leg with the scythe."

"Poor chap ! I expect you and I have the good luck to be made of sterner stuff. My father frightens him ; he hates anything that is afraid of him, and Fred knows it."

"Well, dear boy, if anybody can make a man of Fred, you can."

"Sarah," said her cousin, suddenly stopping in the middle of the road, "this is the very spot where I fought that fellow. Do you remember ?"

"So it is, the very spot ; and it was here the girl scratched me for keeping her off you."

"Do you remember what you did before we moved off home?"

Sarah's wide-open blue eyes stared straight into his.

"Yes; I kissed your poor bruised face, and you told me to pick up our clothes and not be a muff; so I did," she said, laughing.

"I should not say that now, Sarah," he ventured, returning the stare with eyes full of adoration.

"No, and I should not kiss you now, either; so you see, dear boy, we have grown quite polite to each other since then."

"Why wouldn't you kiss me now?" he demanded regretfully.

"Oh, I don't know. Grown-up girls and boys don't kiss. Come along, Gideon. Look, the sun is nothing but a red ball behind Jacob's house, and the frost is settling all over my fur. We must hurry. How glorious it is! Let us take hands and run down the hill."

He had no choice. She impetuously dragged him on, and hand-in-hand they rushed down, till, reaching the bottom, they charged into two horsemen who were turning out of the cross lane on to the road. They rapidly reined up, and half a dozen dogs jumped and barked around them.

"Eh? What? God bless my soul, it is Dare-devil Sally and my lad!" shouted a jovial voice out of the tumult.

"It is Uncle Dol! Oh, uncle, what fun! Here, give me your hand, quick," cried his niece, laughing; then, seizing it, she put her foot on to his boot and sprang up behind him.

"Bravo, Sally! A pity there is no mount for you, lad," and Sir Godolphin Leigh moved on, Sarah chattering to his delighted ears.

Gideon stood still, patting the neck of his uncle's horse.

"Been out together all the afternoon?" asked Dan Thornborough, bending down to his nephew, who glanced up at him with a wistful look.

"Yes," answered the young man.

His uncle laid a hand on his shoulder and said in a low voice :

“Patience, my boy.”

Gideon leaned his arms against the horse’s neck and laid down his head on them.

“She does not care for me in that way in the least,” he groaned. “My great-grandfather married at twenty-one, and our great-grandmother was only seventeen. Sarah is eighteen, but she does not understand a bit.”

“She is none the worse for that. Pluck up your courage. Play the man,” said his uncle kindly.

“She has been asking me why I gave up all thought of the army. She does not seem to have any idea about joining the two estates, or that it seems best to stay with my father, who has so little idea of managing his.”

His uncle was silent. He shook the reins and his horse began to pace slowly along. Gideon Leigh walked at its side.

“You still think I made a mistake ? You would have had me take up a profession as I wished, even if I meant to look after the land later on ?”

“I had my say, Gideon.”

“I know you did. I agreed with you. It has all been my father’s doing. My out-look is pleasant enough, but I should have been a better man in the end if I could have had a turn at what I was cut out for before I settled down.” And the young man stretched out a mighty pair of arms, then let them fall heavily at his side.

“Ay,” assented his uncle, “a much better man.”

“You dear old chap, how you do understand a fellow !” cried Gideon affectionately.

“I practised on my brother Jasper, years ago. Your grandfather was averse to his entering the army. I upheld Jasper.”

“I expect you were always a brick. I suppose Sarah is very like her father, isn’t she ?”

"No; she is your mother over again, only Jael was dark. I sometimes think, Gideon," he added regretfully, "that it is I whom you are like. In fate as in character."

His nephew looked quickly up at him.

"You mean——" he asked.

"That you will love as I have loved, lose as I lost, and stay on the land as I have stayed."

Gideon Leigh said nothing; he had never before heard his uncle allude to the trouble of his youth.

They paced along in silence till the cheery voice of Sir Godolphin sounded through the frosty air and the darkness, shouting:

"Here, my boy, come and open this gate. That rascal of yours, Dan, has shut it, though we told him not to."

Then the young man reached a hand up, laid it on his uncle's arm, and said, in answer to his last words:

"A man might play for a poorer stake than that of becoming a second Dan Thornborough. I am willing to take the odds."

A pleased look came over his uncle's face; he smiled.

"'Crabbed age and youth cannot live together,' eh? You and I, at any rate, have proved that saying untrue. You were ever a generous and forbearing lad."

Gideon laughed.

"There is not much of 'crabbed age' about you. All right, I'm coming," he shouted, as Sarah's voice was heard impatiently demanding to have the gate opened.

"Sarah, always Sarah," said Dan Thornborough to himself, as he walked his horse leisurely toward the gate. "I differ from Rachel, who is so certain that the child will take the lad. Well, well, sending them out to see the world is surely the best I can do for them both at present."

CHAPTER II

A FORTNIGHT after the receipt of Percy Meakin's letter Gideon and Sarah joined their relations in London, and a few days afterward the whole party found themselves settled in a small town on the French side of the Pyrenees.

Here, from the snow and mists and keen winds of their northern home, they came into a land of sunshine, budding trees, and gentle breeze. Here was a pleasant social life among winter visitors, in a friendly town, all bent upon amusing or being amused during the winter months they had to spend together.

Those families who had been there since the previous autumn were already all acquainted, and when the Meakins arrived a constant round of expeditions, tea-parties, and dances was going on, in which they were not slow to participate.

Sarah began to make discoveries. First, that her nephew and niece were nervous prigs, their small minds forced into premature development by her sister. Also, that the standard of right and wrong among the people she met was a very elastic one compared with that which she had been required to satisfy at Meads. Also, that she herself was looked upon as an heiress, and her cousin, Mr. Leigh, was pronounced to be "handsome"; and that it was actually regarded as possible that he was old enough to be married, and that one or two young ladies in the English colony were spoken of as being suitable for him.

All these things set Sarah thinking, with the result that she was so puzzled that she put them aside to discuss with her uncle on her return home, and yielded to the spirit of the hour with all the zest that her youth and vigor afforded her.

But sometimes her views clashed against her sister's and promptly she delivered her testimony.

"Now, then, children, make haste and go to bed," she ordered briskly one evening, when the whole party were going out to a dance at one of the hotels, and May and Robin still lingered over the house of cards they were building.

"We're going with you," they answered.

"Nonsense! Bed is the proper place for you two mites. Come, be off; Julie is waiting for you." And Sarah laid a ruthless hand on the cards, upset the house, and shuffled them all away into a drawer.

The children made no moan, but buried their faces in her silken skirts, murmuring:

"Oh, how nice your frock smells! Like lavender. Mother has sandal-wood folded up in hers, and we've got some sewn into ours."

"Disgusting children! Soap and water is all you ought to know about in the way of scents. There, run along, and Aunt Sarah will come and tuck you up, like nice little dormice."

"Do, do! But you must wait till we come home. I mean to dance every dance," announced May, getting on a foot-stool to reach her mother's fan off a marble console table.

Sarah stared.

"So this is the meaning of your best frocks, is it? You really are going?"

"In course we is," declared Robin, the more babyish of the two; "and Julie says I may eat four macaroons when I have danced with Léonore four times."

"You have been out all day; it is perfectly cruel to keep you up now. I would talk to your mother, only it is never any use. I tell you what it is, grown-up people and children ought not to go to the same parties; so if this is the sort of party for you, it can't be the one for me, so I am going to bed. Good-night. I hope you will enjoy yourselves."

"Aunt Sarah, oh, you are so funny! Don't go. Oh,

please stay with us. If you don't go it won't be half so nice. I sha'n't have anybody's lap to sit on when I'm sleepy. Mother is always dancing, and father, too."

But Sarah was inexorable.

"I'm going to bed," she declared. "I want you to tell mother why, as soon as she comes in."

Soon after she had left the room Gideon came in ready to go.

"Now, then, you small people, where is Sarah?"

"Gone to bed," they announced awe-struck, standing hand-in-hand before him.

"No humbug!" he cried, laughing; and, sitting down, he pulled them on to his knees. "Now, then, where is she?"

"Gone to bed. She says if *we* are going it must be the wrong sort of party for her, 'cause she's grown up. We're so sorry."

Gideon began to understand.

Mrs. Meakin came in, slim, well-appointed in toilet, and elegant as usual.

"Oh, Gideon, how kind you always are to my darlings! You will spare May one nice little turn round the room, as you did the other night? I really think her steps are better than Léonore Dupré's."

Gideon put the children gently down and stood up.

"I am not sure that I shall go," he said.

"Why not? You are ready dressed. My dear Gideon, there will be such heart-breakings if you stay away. What else are you going to do?"

"It is a wild night; I think I shall go and get Pierre to come for a stroll along the cliff with me; the sea must be splendid."

"Going out with Pierre? You glory in being queer. I am quite disappointed in you." And Mabel Meakin sank down on the sofa and pointed to a footstool.

He fetched it for her, saying:

"I don't 'glory' in anything that I know of. Pierre is

very good company; he tells me all about the habits of the people in these parts. Besides, I don't feel inclined for all the gas and Babel of languages in the hotel to-night."

"I cannot think why you got ready if you did not mean to go. Where can Percy be? He has not come in. We shall be late."

"I'll go and hunt him up. He is upstairs on old Murray's flat, I think. Good-by, babies; have a good time and dance all the dances."

So saying he left the room and went along the corridor to his cousin's door, at which he tapped gently. Sarah's clear voice answered briskly:

"Can't come in, whoever you are, French or English." Then she added in French: "I am gone to bed."

"I say, Sarah," he began in a low voice.

The door was torn open and Sarah stood before him in the gleaming dress in which she had intended to go to the dance.

"Halloa!" she cried, "I suppose you are just off. The children have told you I'm not coming, I suppose. I want to give Mabel a lesson."

"Don't go to bed, you absurd girl; come out along the cliff for a walk. It is a glorious night."

"Aren't you going with Percy and Mabel?"

"Of course not. It is no fun without you."

"You *dear* boy. What a pity I did not happen to tell the children I was going for a walk instead of saying I was going to bed. Then I could have come!"

Gideon saw that he should have to go for his walk alone. Anybody else but Sarah he would have attempted to persuade.

"I'll come back when they are gone, and you and I will have supper here together," he suggested.

She shook her head.

"Won't do! I told those chicks I was going to bed, so to bed I must go, or they will never believe me again. Tell

Mabel to bring them in to see me. Of course I never thought of your staying away, too. I say, it will go all over the town. What fun ! Mabel will never have the face to take those poor babies out again in the evening. Everybody will be so dreadfully angry when they find out the reason you and I stayed away. Poor Mr. Ferdinand Smith and that nice young Spaniard and M. Dupré ! I promised dances to all of them. What fun ! ”

Gideon laughed.

“ It is hard lines on them,” he said.

“ There, go, quick. Bring me the second volume of my book. I must have something to read all the evening. Oh, no; you need not. I will go to sleep instead, and be ready for a walk at six to-morrow morning, as I can’t go with you to-night.”

“ All right ! ” he answered, as she shut her door as suddenly as she had opened it.

It took Mabel Meakin two or three days before she clearly understood the reason for her sister’s action.

“ I suppose Sarah and Gideon had been having a quarrel. All that nonsense about the children was merely a blind, of course,” she said to her husband.

They were walking home after changing their books at the library. They stopped to greet an acquaintance, and when they passed on again Percy Meakin answered:

“ About that silly affair the other night: I was going to say that I think you had better let the children stay at home on a future occasion. I did not see any others there, excepting that mincing little brat, Léonore.”

“ You don’t mean to say you really think Sarah stayed at home because I took the children, do you ? ” demanded his wife incredulously.

“ I don’t mean to say anything, except that I won’t have the children taken out again at night.”

“ And you think, then, that Sarah had not been quarrelling with Gideon ? ”

"Of course she had not. It seems to me that I know your sister better than you do, Mabel."

"Well, I never thought Sarah was spiteful before. The children dance really beautifully; it is very disagreeable of her to have prevented my taking them out. What is the use of their dancing, if nobody is to see them?"

"Sarah has not prevented your taking them. It is I who have forbidden it," he said coolly.

"Oh, if I can feel you would not allow it anyway, that makes all the difference, of course," she replied with a relieved air.

Her husband was smoking. He said nothing for some minutes. Then his wife began again:

"I am rather disappointed in Sarah; she promised to be pretty, but nobody would call her so now, would they?"

"Oh, she is good-looking; not a beauty, of course, but certainly more than passable. Her hair is very fine; you don't often see that spun-gold sort of hair."

"No Thornborough has ever been ugly, so I hear," she returned. "But the heiress of Meads ought to be really beautiful."

"Why? With Meads at her back it could not matter how plain she was, I should have thought."

"Look at Gideon, now. Everybody here simply raves over his good looks. He has not the least self-consciousness. And I don't believe Sarah sees that he is at her feet. So silly of her! I want to shake her sometimes."

"I would not try if I were you," he said, laughing. "Your uncle is the only person who can manage her."

"Of course Uncle Dan is a perfect dear. But don't slang Sarah too much, Percy. She is very good to the children, and they obey her much better than they do us. She is really very kind-hearted; you always agree to that, you know you do."

"Oh, I am very fond of Sarah; she is a thoroughly good

sort. I flatter myself I understand her. I should not care to have had to marry her, though."

"My dear Percy, I should hope not ! I know you never have admired those big, bouncing sort of girls. I can't imagine how it is that Sarah and I are so different."

"Bringing up, I suppose, considering you are both from the same stock. *Voilà tout !*"

"How beautifully you do pronounce, dear ! To change the subject. Can't we make that expedition over the border before Sarah goes ?"

"Yes. Next week. I have made out all the trains. Ask the Ferdinand Smiths and the Clintons to come, too. They intend going ; we might make up a party if young Clinton is up to it."

"Oh, yes ; the days are so warm now it won't hurt him. It is a very good idea. But what shall we do about the language ? There will not be a word of Spanish among us."

"We shall not want it," he answered. "We can take lunch with us, and the four o'clock train gets us back here in time for *table d'hôte*. We need not speak a word of that beastly Spanish."

"Look ! there they are, coming down the hill. Oh, Percy, what a goose she will be if she does not marry him !"

The husband and wife stood still and watched them coming. The sun shone on Sarah's yellow wavy hair, and lighted the dusky shadows of Gideon's curls. He carried his hat in his hand, covered with his handkerchief, and, from time to time, he stopped that she might look at something it contained. Their two strong, straight figures stood outlined against the white road, as they tramped down it in step, laughing and talking eagerly. A woman of the country, driving an ass with panniers, paused to look at them, then went on smiling to herself. Two soldiers, leaning out of a window, smoking their pipes, leaned out still further to watch them coming. The girls of the convent school, conducted by two solemn Sisters, turned each one to stare as they passed

them. The old curé lifted his hat and beamed, as he crossed the road in front of them to go into a house. A child ran barefoot out of a doorway and offered them violets. Gideon threw her a coin, and handed the violets to Sarah; she divided them, stopping to stick half into his buttonhole and half into her own.

The gorse beside the road was in blossom, the sails of the fishing-boats shone red, and the sea sparkled in the sunshine.

"Spring and youth and strength, and sunshine and flowers, and those two making love. Very appropriate," remarked Percy Meakin critically.

"Sunshine! Yes, indeed. It is too hot to-day for my fur cape; I wish you would carry it for me. I could eat a cream cake, I think; come in here and get one for me," said Mabel Meakin carelessly.

At nine o'clock one brilliant morning in the week following, the Meakins and their friends stood on the platform, waiting for the train which was to convey them as far as the border town, where they would change into the Spanish train. Percy Meakin was in his element. He had commanded his little troop each to bring a packet of lunch, a coat or shawl as a protection after sunset, and some Spanish money in case they should wish to make purchases. He himself carried in a strap his guide-book, his maps and conversation-book, his packet of lunch, and a light overcoat; his binocular hung in a strap across his shoulder. A leather case containing the tickets of the entire party reposed in his breast-pocket.

The youth he had spoken of to his wife as "young Clinton" was the only serious invalid among them, and the mildness of the weather weighed finally against the anxious fears of his sisters and brother, who were also of the party. Ferdinand Smith stuck to Sarah, which did not offend Gideon Leigh, to whom she had confided that he was "an awful sawney."

On changing at the frontier they found themselves in the various compartments of a long third-class carriage. One of

the Ferdinand Smiths leaned forward and began to explain the probable nationalities of the other passengers to Mrs. Meakin.

Sarah overheard part of his remarks, and gathered that there were Basques, French, and Spaniards ; she might have gleaned more had she not been entirely absorbed in watching a fair-haired peasant woman, with a blue handkerchief twisted on her head, talking volubly to a clean-shaven man in the blue blouse and bonnet of the country. The woman gesticulated and laughed, showing her white teeth ; the man listened and nodded, putting in a remark from time to time. Their loud voices, fearless, frank glances, their air of substantial prosperity, and noble cast of feature attracted Sarah strangely, and the peculiar roll of their words and emphasis made her say at last :

"I know it isn't French ; but I wish I knew whether it was Basque or Spanish."

She spoke out clearly to Gideon, who sat opposite to her. The couple stopped talking and surveyed her with frank, interested eyes.

"What does it matter ? All these jargons are alike ; one sound more hideous than another," cried young Ferdinand Smith.

"Gideon, which is it ? Ask Percy to listen when they begin again ; he might know."

"I should think it is Basque, but then, as I never heard Spanish spoken, it may turn out to be Spanish," said her cousin. "Percy won't know. Listen, they are at it again. It is very melodious. I expect they are Basques ; they look that type."

"I do wish Uncle Dan were here, he would be sure to know. It is very stupid. It is like walking in a dark room, to be going about with people you can't understand. I do *wish* I knew," insisted Sarah.

"Those people are Basques. They are speaking their own language ; it is not Spanish. They have just been deciding

that you are an English party out on an excursion," said a man's voice in English, from the next compartment, immediately behind Sarah.

She turned round sharply, but could only see him sideways.

"Thank you," she said. "Are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

Gideon Leigh nodded to him.

"Thanks," he said. "It is a difficult language to follow."

"It is," replied the stranger, and seemed about to speak again; but Sarah had leaned forward, and was dragging May and Robin into a corner near the window, so that they might see out. Presently they stopped at a station, and several passengers got out. Somebody went to the window, asking questions of the guard, who answered him, banged the door, and the train went off again. Sarah had jerked round to see who was speaking. It was the same man who had addressed her.

He resumed his seat, this time not so immediately behind her. Their eyes met.

"Were you talking Spanish?" demanded Sarah admiringly.

"Yes."

"How clever you must be!"

The stranger smiled.

"I do not speak it very well," he said. "If you understood it yourself, you would know."

She edged round sideways, so that she could see him better.

"That makes two languages you know."

"No; only one. Nobody ever learns to speak Euscarra. I understand it a little, that is all."

"Euscarra, Gideon; do you hear? That is what Uncle Dan read to us about? Do you remember?"

"Yes, of course I do. Did you bring any sketching things with you?"

"No, I forgot. Ask Miss Clinton."

And Sarah turned round and began her catechism again.

"Do you speak French ? Comfortably, I mean ; not with a stammer?"

But the stranger seemed to have been aware of the disapprobation in Gideon's voice, and Mrs. Meakin suddenly said languidly but clearly:

"Who are you talking to, Sarah ? Put up the window, or May will get toothache."

So all he said in answer to Sarah was :

"Yes, I speak French."

Then drawing a book from his pocket, he took the only vacant seat in his compartment on the opposite side, and was soon absorbed in his reading.

"Well," declared Sarah, turning round again to her own party, "he must be very clever. I wanted to talk to him. Why did you bother me, Mabel?"

"You can't talk to every stranger you meet, my dear child," said her sister tranquilly.

"I don't want to," returned Sarah haughtily. Then, catching her cousin's eye, she laughed.

Soon after this they reached their destination, and all got out. The train had gone on again before it occurred to Sarah to nod a good-by to the stranger. When she looked back, the carriage they had been in had already got beyond the platform, and the curve of the line hid it from her.

The object of the expedition was to see a certain harbor. Its entrance, between two walls of rock, was a long narrow passage, opening out into a sheet of water shaped like a vast inland pond. On its shores all round was a small straggling town of wooden houses ; beyond them towered the mountains. The train had brought the party almost to the edge of the harbor, among the dark-beamed houses whose sides the water washed. Facing them across the harbor was the narrow channel leading out between the walls of rock into the surging open sea beyond.

"Now, I understand a harbor at last !" declared Sarah, gazing with delighted eyes.

Everybody laughed.

"What a place for artists!" cried someone. "Look at all those wonderful carved balconies, with those sad-colored olive and red-brown garments hanging over them. Look at those peeps of green mountain-sides through open doorways, and stone steps from the streets between the houses up to the hills."

"Where to first, Mr. Meakin?" cried somebody else.

"To the church across the harbor." And he marshalled his party toward the boat, which an excited, bare-legged fisherman was holding in readiness.

During their passage across the harbor Sarah never spoke. She had not dreamed of such a place. She sat quite still, holding Robin's little cold fingers in her own warm ones, staring around and across and above.

"Don't talk to me," she said once when Gideon made some remark. "Dear boy, there are plenty to talk; let me alone."

They examined the great dark church, the fine ironwork on balconies, doors, and lamps, the wooden houses, the shipping. Afterward they spread their lunch on one of the stones that lay beside the winding path leading round the cliff to the light-house. The air was clear, the sunshine brilliant; the harbor was full of vessels, the inhabitants busy. Snow still lay far away on the mountain-tops, which seemed to touch the sky. The hours went by; it became time to recross the harbor and go back to the station. It was difficult to collect all the lounging, laughing, talking party, and when they disembarked on the stone stairway they saw their train slowly coming into the station.

"Hurry, hurry! These trains are very leisurely, we may just catch it," cried Percy Meakin.

But for once the train was not leisurely, and as they hurried into the little station the train steamed out of it.

"I suppose we can take the next?" said somebody.

"Oh, yes, or get carriages and drive home. We cannot have come more than twenty miles," said another.

"No; at the most not more than that ; it is dawdling about on the frontier that takes up the time," declared a third.

Percy Meakin came up to the group.

"I am very sorry. We ought to have allowed more time to cross the harbor. There is no train back for four hours, and of course there are no carriages to be had. There are no hotels here ; this is merely a harbor, you see."

A council was held on the little gravelled platform. The officials had retired into a sort of shed ; there was not a creature about but themselves.

Finally, some of the party, after consulting Mr. Meakin's excellent maps, decided to walk back, only twelve miles, by going over the mountains. After they had started, it was suggested that the remainder should occupy the time by going to see the large and bustling town of San Pascual, only three miles off, and a tram being descried going along in the road in that direction, they hurried toward it and got in.

"Now, we are really in for it. All on our way into a big Spanish town, none of us able to speak or understand a word, four hours before us, and dinner to be ordered somehow. This is what *I* call an adventure," declared Sarah with satisfaction.

Her brother-in-law got out his guide-books ; the responsibility was becoming serious. Young Clinton looked white and languid, his relations polite, but evidently very anxious. The children were excited. It would be impossible to reach home again before eleven o'clock that night. Mrs. Meakin sat placidly at her husband's side ; other people were, as usual, taking care of her children.

"Shall we have enough money for a dinner, do you suppose? Everybody spent a lot of money in that old shop on the quay," she remarked to him.

"Oh, we shall do, if they will take English gold. I have no French money left," he replied. "It is a great bore. The whole expedition is spoiled."

Sarah overheard him.

"Don't say that, Percy. It is not your fault. I, for one, think this is great fun ; we shall manage somehow. And as for the children, I'll see they don't tire out Mabel. It is a tremendously long day for them."

Then they relapsed into silence and jogged on for about a mile. There was nothing to see along the country road, and the few people in the tram were not interesting.

Sarah put her arm through Gideon's, and leaning against him, began to tell a story to May, who was perched on his knee. One of the Clinton sisters had taken compassion on the excitable Robin, and held him by his small coat, standing in the doorway, so that he could see the horses.

Suddenly Sarah stopped in her recital.

"Look there, Gideon ! Quick ! Coming down the bank into the road. Do you see ? There is the man who was in the train this morning. I do believe he is going to get in here. Yes, he is swinging himself up the step. Here he comes."

The stranger entered, and sat down opposite them. Recognizing Sarah, he lifted his hat in answer to her smile, but said nothing.

Sarah continued her story in a low voice, but hurried it to an end, for she saw the stranger's brown eyes were fixed upon them, though he looked over her shoulder and out of the window every time she glanced at him.

Presently Percy Meakin and Ferdinand Smith began to discuss the value of Spanish money, and the advisability of going first or last to look over the church of San Pascual. The stranger began to look interested, set them right on one or two points, and when the tram stopped at the corner of a large square, and they all got out, the three men were so busy talking that the rest of the party followed them slowly toward the great church. There seemed a tacit understanding that the stranger was to be of their party, for he entered with them, and Percy Meakin plied him with incessant questions. Mrs. Meakin and one of her friends kept close to

them ; one of the Clinton girls dragged Gideon off to look at an altar ; Sarah, holding her nephew and niece by the hand, wandered aside to watch a baby being christened, and to examine the collection of black-hooded and cloaked women who were attending the mother.

"Is he dusting the baby ? What is he doing ?" asked Robin in a whisper, clutching his aunt tightly.

"Can't imagine," she replied.

"It looks more like a funeral than a christening," whispered May. "I don't think he is dusting the baby ; I think he is holy-watering it, like Julie tells us about."

"Hush !" commanded Sarah, "we are in church."

They stood listening to the priest's monotonous voice till the service was over and he went away ; the bustle among the women seemed to suggest that they were going also.

Then Sarah turned slowly round to find the stranger standing at her side ; all the rest of the party were at the further end of the church.

"I came to fetch you to look into the sacristy," he explained.

"Have you been waiting ?" she asked.

"Only a few minutes. I saw you were interested. There is no hurry."

They began to move across the vast, bare body of the church, empty of pew or chair.

May had slipped her other hand into his, and Robin left his aunt and went round to his other side.

"How dark it is !" whispered Sarah, looking up at the small, unevenly placed windows.

"Yes ; the Spanish churches in this part make me feel as though they had been built as refuges in time of war, rather than for worship," he replied.

"Why didn't one of the others come to fetch me ? They ought not to have sent you," she declared suddenly.

"They were all occupied. I noticed you were not with them. They did not send me."

"I suppose you have been here numbers of times?" she said, when he had stopped for some minutes to relate to her the history of a certain saint whose virtues were recorded in a stained window.

"I know San Pascual tolerably well; I am fond of travelling."

"And I have never travelled before. We should not be here now, only we missed the train, and we cannot get home till the evening express goes. And none of us can speak a word. And if we had not met you we might as well have been bats coming to see this town, because we can't ask a question or read a word," cried Sarah.

"Hush!" ordered Robin, "you said we was in church. What a noise you are making! Isn't she?" he added, clutching the hand of their guide and compelling an answer.

He smiled.

"I do not think your sister will be very severely punished here."

"*Sister!*" they both cried. "She is our *aunt*."

"Come, let us go outside; I don't want to see the sacristy. Look, the others are just ready to leave, and we can't talk in here. Do you mind waiting for them outside?"

"Not in the least," he declared with alacrity.

So the quartette turned, and waited on the steps of the porch.

"Are you coming with us?" asked Sarah, looking straight at him with her bright blue eyes.

"Do! oh, do!" cried the children.

He looked pleased.

"You seem to be a large party and to have plenty of guides," he said hesitatingly.

"We *were* a large party, but some of us have walked home; and have not I told you we have not a guide among us? But perhaps you are going somewhere to join your own party?" she added.

"No ; I am alone."

"Dear me, how very dull ! I should hate that. Do you like it best ?"

"I am accustomed to it. I always take my holiday alone."

"Why does not your wife come with you ?" she demanded.

He looked at her with a puzzled but amused air, and said quietly :

"I am not married."

"Oh, then you are an old bachelor like Uncle Dan, I suppose ?" she said, stooping to put her niece's hat straight.

"I am thirty-two. Is that old ?"

Sarah drew herself up tall and straight before him. She looked at him consideringly.

"It is younger than Uncle Dan, but it is ever so much older than I am. Eighteen, you know, that is my age. Of course, that accounts for your being so clever ; you see you have had more time to learn things in than I have. What do you do all day ? Are you in the Civil Service, like my brother-in-law, or do you live on your land, as we all do ?"

"Neither. I am in business," he said, becoming suddenly grave. Then, dropping the children's hands, he added, "I think I must be going. I have told—your brother-in-law, I suppose it was—where to find a good place in which to dine."

"Oh, please wait a minute, unless you really *must* go. It seems such a pity, just as I want to ask you so many things. I never met anybody in business before. How interesting ! Don't go just yet," implored Sarah.

"I do not think you would find it interesting at all," he said stiffly. "Good-by."

"Ah, there you are. That's right !" cried Percy Meakin, issuing from the church door at the head of his party. "Do you happen to know the nearest way to that square where the bull-fights used to be held ? It would be a charity to show us the way, if you are not pressed for time. And just look at this map of mine, if you don't mind ; is this the spot ? Don't be such a nuisance, children ; go and walk with Sarah."

The stranger glanced at her as if to see whether the name referred to her or not, then turned and walked on with Percy Meakin, examining the map he held open. The children again hung on to his hands. Gideon shook off Miss Clinton and came to his cousin's side. They walked on together.

"I am so sorry you have been left to that fellow," he began.

"You need not be sorry. I have been enjoying myself immensely; he has been explaining everything to me."

"Rather cool of him to stick himself on to us like this, isn't it?"

"My *dear* Gideon, he did not stick himself on, as you call it. Percy asked him to show him the way."

"Oh, well, I dare say he will be very useful. Just look at those cloaks those fellows have on! Awfully artistic, aren't they, thrown over the shoulder like that?"

Sarah laughed.

"You should get one," she said; "it would suit you."

For the next hour or so the party trailed about, now stopping to look at shops, now wandering through a church, now halting in a square to admire the buildings. They came at last to some public gardens. Everybody was tired and sank upon the benches.

"Stay here," ordered Percy Meakin. "This is pretty near to the station and to a decent restaurant, you say?" and he turned to the stranger.

"Yes," he replied, "that is why I have piloted you here. That is the post-office opposite; your party can wait here while you send your telegrams. Your best plan will be to dine at the *table d'hôte* provided for the express at the frontier; they leave more than an hour for it, you will find, before the train starts; then you need only have some light refreshment here."

"A very good plan," returned Percy Meakin, with a relieved air. "Here, Gideon, come with me, will you, there's a good fellow."

Gideon arose reluctantly from the bench beside his cousin.

"Go on," she cried; "go and help him out. Poor Percy has felt a perfect Atlas this afternoon with all his responsibilities."

The stranger lingered near. He had not been asked either to go or stay.

Mrs. Meakin and the Clintons were sitting on Sarah's bench. Young Ferdinand Smith leaned over it behind and talked to her. Sarah gave him only half her attention. She was wondering whether her sister would perceive that the stranger had walked a few paces off and was standing with his back to them, apparently absorbed in gazing into the fountain. Finding that Mabel pursued her conversation, Sarah called out with her usual decision:

"You had better come and sit down here. There is plenty of room."

It seemed that he did not hear. She jumped up, went to him, and repeated her order.

"You have been taking such a lot of trouble for us, don't stand here by yourself," she urged.

His impassive face showed no sign of pleasure, but he came and sat down by her.

"You never asked *me* to sit there," murmured Ferdinand Smith in her ear.

"You did not need asking—he did," retorted Sarah in a scornful whisper.

The youth shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and walked away to the bench where the others were sitting.

There were beds of spring flowers in the garden; children were playing in and out among the shrubs on the grass, or watching the sparkle of the water as it fell in showers into the basin of the fountain. Nurses walked up and down in white caps and handsome black dresses, many with their long hair hanging in a tail down their backs, tied with broad ribbons. Some wheeled dainty babies in dainty carriages, some led daintily dressed children by the hand. All were talking and

laughing. It was still daylight, but the light was waning. The soft spring air scarcely ruffled the spray of the steadily falling water.

Sarah Thornborough sat watching all this scene so new to her, so unlike anything else she had ever seen. The stranger, too, watched it all, and her.

The light died away in the west. The nurses collected their charges and went out by degrees through the great iron gates. The garden was almost deserted.

The stranger turned to Mrs. Meakin.

"Your husband knows the restaurant ; I have shown it to him. Unless your friends are accustomed to sitting out at nightfall, I would not advise you to remain here any longer. Will you allow me to take you to get some refreshment ? He will know where we are."

"You are very kind," she said, somewhat haughtily, "perhaps that would be best;" and rising, she collected her party, and guided by him they reached the restaurant.

Naturally the ordering of all their food fell to him.

"Do be so kind as to tell the waiter what we want ; my sister will tell you," said Mrs. Meakin, languidly dropping on to the long, low sofa and lifting her tired children up beside her. The rest of the party pulled up a table and joined it on to hers. Young Clinton sank exhausted on to the sofa, his anxious sisters sat down beside him ; Mrs. Meakin handed them her smelling-bottle.

May began to whimper.

"I'm so *dreadfully* tired," she moaned.

"Make haste, Sarah ; find out what everybody wants," cried her sister.

"I say, it's awfully good of you !" declared Sarah, when the stranger had duly translated the various orders for chocolate, tea, coffee, cakes, bread, butter, and wine.

He smiled.

"What else can I do for you ?" he asked.

"Pour out the tea, will you ? I want to cut this bread

and butter for the children. Miss Clinton, you are looking after your table, I know."

"Would you ask your friend to be kind enough to order us some milk?" asked that lady.

Sarah looked in the stranger's face laughingly.

"Do you hear? You are considered my special 'find.' I hope you don't mind."

"Do *you*?" he asked, reaching over to Mrs. Meakin's cup with his tea-pot.

"Do I what?"

"Mind my being regarded as your special 'find'?"

"Oh, dear, no. I am sure I do not know what we should have done without you. Not so much tea in Robin's cup, please; he has it nearly all milk. There, Mabel, drink yours; it will do you good, though it is such poor stuff. This is cinnamon powdered in my chocolate—how queer!" she continued, when she was at last at liberty to begin her own repast.

"Will you take nothing yourself?" asked Mabel Meakin, as she languidly sipped her tea.

"No, thank you; I dine in an hour," he replied, looking at his watch.

"How very kind of you to wait with us! We are all too tired to be amusing, I am afraid," declared Sarah.

Here Percy Meakin and Gideon rejoined them.

Sarah dragged forward an empty chair at her side, and called her cousin to her.

"Come, I have kept a cup of chocolate for you. Sit by me, dear boy."

He devoted himself to her during the rest of the meal, and Percy Meakin discussed with the stranger whether there would be time to go to a hat-shop to purchase a particularly artistic, drooping shape which had taken his fancy.

It ended in their all adjourning thither on their way to the station. Mrs. Meakin woke up and became quite lively over trying hats on to Robin. The Clintons and the Ferdinand

Smiths went on to the station, and carried Gideon off with them. Sarah remained, at her sister's request, to look after the children.

The shop was lighted up ; it was dark in the narrow street outside. The stately proprietor leaned against his counter, grimly watching them making free with his goods. Sarah got tired of waiting, and went to the door. There, to her surprise, leaning against the shop window, was the stranger, staring into the night, and smoking a cigarette.

"I thought you had gone on with the others," she said.

He turned toward her, threw his cigarette into the road, and replied :

"No, I waited for your brother-in-law. He would get cheated without me."

Sarah opened her eyes wide.

"How *very* kind of you ! I should think your people must be awfully fond of you ; aren't they ?"

"Yes."

"Have you got a father and mother ; or are they dead, like mine ?"

"They are both dead. But you are young to have lost both parents."

"Oh, I am used to it, it was so long ago. Besides, when you have a really good uncle, like my Uncle Dan, it does just as well, you know. Are you an only child, like me ? Mabel doesn't count ; she's married."

"I have two married sisters and one unmarried. She is a hospital nurse."

"Oh, that brings me back to what we were talking about just now. Your business—do you like it ?"

"Extremely."

"What sort of things do you do ?"

He smiled.

"Do you really wish me to tell you ?"

"Of course, or I should not have asked. Make haste !" she cried impatiently.

"Sarah !" called Percy Meakin from within.

"There, I knew we should get interrupted !" she said in a vexed voice, as she went back into the shop.

Mr. Meakin wanted his help, as the stranger had foreseen. When the transaction was over, and they passed out into the street, Mabel took her husband's arm. Sarah, intent upon gaining her point, dropped a little behind with the tired children, and, as they approached the bridge, she found the stranger at her side.

The night was a brilliant one ; many stars were already visible in the clear sky, though the lingering glow in the west outshone the greater number of them. The river, coming from among the tall dark houses, ran swift and silent under the bridge on one side, while out from beneath it on the other it hurried into the shimmering sea not many yards away. They came across the bridge on to a square. A few people were leisurely crossing it. The trees were in bud ; their tassel-laden branches waved in the evening breeze, and cast patterns of delicate tracery on the ground. The balmy scents of a spring evening were in the air.

"What a lovely night !" said Sarah, taking a deep breath. Her companion stopped a moment, as if absorbed in some thought ; he swept his hand toward the sky, saying :

" ' Ye heavens . . .

You remain

A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizon be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency !
How it were good to live there, and breathe free ;
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still ! "

"Why, you say poetry almost as well as Uncle Dan !" declared Sarah admiringly, as they walked on again.

"It just came into my head," he said apologetically. "Do you not think it applies to a night like this ?"

"Yes ; but then I don't think I ever doubted but that all our 'lots' are 'fair.'"

"That shows you have never had any trouble," he said.

"No, I have not, and I don't intend to have. Trouble is generally people's own fault. I mean to keep out of it. I should be so angry if I had a great deal of trouble. I am sure it would not do me any good at all," she declared rebelliously.

"You will not be able to avoid it, and it might not be the best thing for you if you could. You had better make up your mind to meet it bravely, and be strong in spite of it. Trouble is the lot of every man, at some time in his life," he said sadly.

"Has it fallen to yours ?" she demanded.

"Oh, yes."

Sarah walked on, kicking the pebbles with her old childish impatience.

"Well, I don't want to hear about it, anyway. Tell me what your business is, please."

"We make all kinds of agricultural implements; we employ a large number of hands; we are interested in everything of the kind that is used in other countries. But why should I tell you about it? People care more to hear about events or books or languages ; they are seldom interested in hearing how things are made."

"I am," cried Sarah eagerly. "I am ; so is Uncle Dan. Uncle Dol is not. I suppose you are used to people like him. He buys a reaper, for instance, and does not trouble in the least how it is made. *We* like to know. But then you must study drawings. When catalogues come, we—I mean Jacob Frant, he is our bailiff, and Uncle Dan, and I—understand the pictures ever so much better than anybody else round us, because we can all draw all the parts. Can you draw ?"

"Certainly. I know how each part of each machine is made. I have established evening classes for the youths in

our employ. I wish them to grow into intelligent workmen, who will see the beauty of what they are doing, and——”

“I’m so dredf’ly tired !” sighed Robin, suddenly stopping.

“Can’t you carry me, Aunt Sarah ?”

“Let me,” said the stranger, lifting the boy in his arms.

“Shall I carry you, May ?” asked Sarah.

But May’s legs were sturdier than Robin’s, and she dragged on her way, supported by her aunt’s firm hand.

“Where is your home ?” Sarah demanded suddenly.

“I have none.”

“Nonsense !” she returned, laughing.

“A patch of ground with four walls built on it, surrounding some tables and chairs, does not constitute a ‘home,’ does it ?”

“Dear me, what a funny way of putting it ! Well, where do you keep all your treasures, the things you like best ?”

“In a little shanty in the mountains, not far from here. But I will not joke with you. I understand what you wish to know. I live chiefly in lodgings in London. I see to all the town part of our business. Our works are not in London.”

“How dreadfully dull !” she bemoaned.

The lights of the station gleamed near them ; it wanted but five minutes by the clock to the hour the train would start. They hurried into the station. Percy took his tired son from the stranger’s arms.

“I am sure I am extremely obliged to you for all your help. We are all leaving in a day or two, or I would ask you to come and see us.”

“Thank you. My wanderings are uncertain.”

Mrs. Meakin held out her hand.

“Good-by. We are most grateful to you, I am sure.”

“Come, make haste ! We must not end by losing *this* train !” cried her husband, hurrying her away.

The stranger turned to Sarah. She held out her hand impulsively.

"Oh, *what* a pity we must say good-by ! I do hope you will enjoy yourself. I wish you were not travelling alone. It must be so dull. I *am* so glad we met you. I shall tell Uncle Dan all about you. Just the most interesting part at the last. I *did* so want to hear more about your business. Good-by. Oh, yes, Gideon, I'm just coming."

"Good-by," said the stranger, as he shook hands. Then suddenly he laid his other hand over hers, and held it for a moment, while he looked thoughtfully in her face, and in a low voice repeated, "Good-by. I thank you for to-day. I hope you will remain always just as you are now."

Then he lifted his hat and went out of the station. Gideon Leigh was hurrying toward her. She seized him by the hand, and together they rushed into the train just as it moved off.

"My first and last day in Spain, I expect," she said gayly. "Oh, dear boy, that *is* a nice man. I wish I had asked him his name."

"You exchanged cards, didn't you, Percy ?" asked Gideon.

"Yes ; but I dropped his. It doesn't matter," answered Percy Meakin, yawning.

"He must have enjoyed himself immensely," whispered Gideon ; "he had you to talk to quite a long time."

"Everybody does not think as much of me as you do," she returned. "Here, put my hat up in the rack, will you ? I can't lean back in it, and I am getting so sleepy. Come, Robin, you and I will have a doze together."

She took the boy on her knee ; Gideon covered them both over with a shawl, and Sarah closed her eyes. For the first time in her life her thoughts went backward instead of forward. She felt again her hand warmly clasped, and heard an earnest voice say, "I hope you will always remain just as you are now." "I wonder what he could possibly have meant ?" was her thought as she finally fell asleep.

Part IV

SARAH THORNBOROUGH GROWS UP

"The fear of man in its best sense is the beginning of wisdom and true ethics. And there is no greater folly than the sacrilege of analysis. When religion in any country resolves itself into oratory or intimacy, it will soon have to die back again into the mystery of worship, if it is ever to be eternal. It is quite possible to have the pen of a too ready writer."

CHAPTER I

THE rejoicings at Leigh Court to celebrate the coming of age of Gideon Leigh were of the same splendid and merry nature as those belonging to the coming of age of many another eldest son. Sir Godolphin's present to him was a slender and beautiful animal, which had been for some time coveted by both father and son in the stables of a friend, who was opportunely selling his place and going abroad.

"Flash knows a thing or two. You say where you want to go, and, bless my soul, lad, why there you are *in a flash*, or rather *on* a Flash. A beauty—such a beauty! Eh? What?" cried Sir Godolphin Leigh, as he stood arm in arm with his son, watching the finely bred animal being led up and down by the groom.

Father and son were both beaming; it was difficult to say which was the better pleased.

"Mustn't let Sally mount Flash, my boy, or there will be the very devil to pay. Flash and Sally have both got tempers. Eh?"

Gideon laughed joyously.

"You know Sarah can manage any animal," he said.

"Eh? What? Of course; but when you and Sally are spliced I shall give her the very ditto of Flash. I know

where to lay my finger on the pretty creature, and a pretty penny she will cost ; but nothing will be too good for your wife, lad. Eh? God bless my soul, what a pair you will make ! Not a better grown pair, nor a pluckier, nor a more God-fearing, in all the country, I'll go bail."

"My dear father, you will certainly choke in your pride if you go on like this," cried Gideon, laughing.

"Pride ! Eh ? What ? Pooh, lad ! Who has a better cause to be proud than I have, I should like to know ? 'Tis a pity about the name, to be sure, but I can't quarrel with your uncle over that ; and when all is said and done you are already half a Thornborough, after all. Leigh-Thornborough don't sound so bad. I wish Fred wasn't quite such a mealy-faced, chicken-hearted chap. Monstrous queer I should have bred such a son."

"Fred is all right ; there is an awful lot in Fred. Give him time. You'll be proud of him yet," declared Gideon.

"Good lad, good lad, to take his part. Bless me, what a couple you'll be to continue the Thornborough line ! Our Sally as mother of a family ! God bless my soul ! Dan will be glad to hear children's voices in the old place again. For an old bachelor, 'tis amazing how he takes to brats."

Gideon Leigh answered nothing. He turned the conversation into another channel, and they walked toward his step-mother, who was coming to meet them.

That winter Sarah Thornborough came out, and the following spring Dan Thornborough sent her up to town to be presented by Lady Leigh, who kept her with her in London till the middle of the summer.

Gideon began to take in hand the Leigh Court estate, and was appalled at the mismanagement that was going on under the incapable rule of his hospitable, easy-going father. He was biding his time in the matter of proposing to his cousin. In spite of her travels, her paying and receiving of visits, the popularity which her position, her straightforward manners, and her prospects had secured for her, she still remained, as

he ruefully called her to himself, "so dreadfully young." No attentions of his, no devotion, no chance remarks of other people, seemed so far in the least to have opened her eyes. She took everything in good part and as a matter of course, and finally she returned from her season in town as affectionate, frank, joyous, and in as rude health as when she had started.

Dan Thornborough drove to the station to meet his darling and take her from her aunt's charge. She sprang out of the train, hugged him with all her usual fervor, and cried:

"Oh, Uncle Dan, I have had a splendid time, but I have been homesick after you, every minute of it."

Then she climbed up into the phaeton and insisted on driving him home; Young George sitting behind, one broad grin of satisfaction at beholding his young mistress again.

"How is Aunt Rachel? All right? I'm glad I went with Aunt Mary; Aunt Rachel would have been a wreck with the late hours, whereas Aunt Mary never turned a hair. How are Jacob and Mrs. Frant and Susan? Why has not Gideon come?"

"What shall I answer first, child?" said her uncle, as he scanned her face anxiously to see if she had not suffered from her late dissipations.

"Answer anyhow you like, so long as you talk to me. You naughty old man, not to have come up just-once to see me! I wanted to show you to one or two girls I met, who were idiots enough to declare that all old men are hideous. Ah, they have never seen my beautiful, courtly, kingly, stately——"

"Hush, hush!" cried her uncle, fairly laughing. "I have had my day. It is time you began to think about a younger man."

"So I will, as soon as I find one as dear and sweet as you."

"Ah, child, I would like to leave you with a good husband before I die."

Sarah laughed merrily.

"Dear, do forgive me. But you are such a wicked old raven, you know. Croaking horrible misfortune like that."

"A good husband is not a misfortune, is he?"

"Tiresome, bad evader of truth! You *know* I referred to your dying. There, don't let us talk about husbands. We don't want any inconvenient interlopers among you and me and Gideon and Aunt Rachel."

"Then you have not lost your heart in town?" pursued Dan Thornborough, regarding her wistfully.

She guided the horses skilfully round a dangerous corner, then turned and looked at him with her clear, honest eyes, and said:

"Why, Uncle Dan, did you really think I had fallen in love with somebody? What a curious idea! I like to amuse myself, that is all."

"But you wrote me word of a vast number of partners at balls, and of men who rode with you," he insisted, anxious once and for all to obtain his niece's views.

"Oh, yes; there were simply heaps—well, a great number," she amended, seeing her uncle's eyebrows raised, and recollecting his objection to hyperbole. "And Aunt Mary seemed to think one or two of them would have proposed if I had let them. Such a queer way of talking! I never heard Aunt Rachel speak so. People don't propose to or accept each other when they hardly know each other, do they?"

"I have occasionally heard of such things," he replied, trying not to smile.

"And then, just picture to yourself my marrying a man who could only ride, and hated reading; or a man who only liked going to balls all night, or drinking brandies and sodas; or a man who couldn't drain a field or milk a cow, or thought Shakspeare and Chaucer old fogies! I could not, Uncle Dan, I really could not. I don't think you can have any idea of how very uninteresting most of them were; and hardly any laughed out like Uncle Dol, or spoke clearly, like you. Half-made, *I* call them, unfinished."

"Unfinished? Were they badly dressed?" demanded her uncle gravely.

"Now, you are laughing at me. Well, you know we used to think Percy rather a poor specimen, but beside many I have met, I call him quite a jewel; at any rate, he is enthusiastic about going abroad, and about his bicycle rides. Lots of the men and girls I met had no enthusiasms, and seemed to look on me as a sort of queer product, even when I amused them most. Am I queer, Uncle Dan?"

Dan Thornborough pondered a moment, then said:

"You are no queerer than all the other people who venture to think for themselves."

"Just what I thought. Oh, and then another thing. There seem to be so many celebrated persons to be met. People are always saying to me: 'What! don't you know *her*? A most remarkable woman;' or, 'What! do you mean to say you never heard of *his* novel, or *his* poems? Quite the most remarkable productions of our time.' And I dare say they are, Uncle Dan; but then, you see, 'our time' may not happen to be producing much, so it is not much honor to be best where everybody is only mediocre."

Dan Thornborough laughed gently to himself.

"Did you happen to make that kind of remark to the lions themselves?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so," she replied, considering the question thoughtfully. "I think I only said it to the people who were showing off the lions. I do remember asking one man, who was simply gushing—don't laugh, you dear; he was really gushing over somebody's poems, and I asked him if they were anything like Herrick, or Shelley, or Chaucer, or Byron, and he said: 'Oh, no; they are quite a different style; much more modern, and very strong.' I don't know what he meant! And oh, Uncle Dan, is not our grandmother an object, with all that false, frizzled hair? Why does she not wear a sweet lace cap, like Aunt Rachel?"

"You seem to have picked out all the deficiencies in your

town acquaintances, and none of their virtues," remarked her uncle.

"Oh, their virtues are merely an accidental absence of vices; their deficiencies are painstakingly cultivated, which is much more interesting," she cried laughingly. "Ah, there is Aunt Rachel in the porch. And how glorious our roses are over it this year! There is nothing like home. Aunt Rachel, Aunt Rachel, you dainty china shepherdess, here I am!"

Miss Thornborough embraced her niece with gentle fervor.

"It is pleasant to see you again, child; I have missed you more than I should have thought possible. I have had tea placed in the arbor."

"How nice of you; and I hope we have got almond cakes!"

Miss Thornborough smiled.

"Yes, Mrs. Frant remembered your favorites. And Gideon will be here to help us eat them, and will remain here over the Sabbath."

"Splendid!" cried Sarah. "I love to see him come tearing up the avenue on Flash; he looks like Sir Galahad or Sir Philip Sidney."

On the following Sunday morning, when Old George and the coach stood waiting at the door, loaded already with those Frants who were going to church, Dan Thornborough turned suddenly to his nephew and said:

"You drive, lad. Your aunt and I will sit behind you."

"Why, Uncle Dan?" cried Sarah, astonished. "You have driven ever since I can remember; it does not seem right for Gideon to do it."

Her uncle waved his hand with an impatience unusual with him, and Gideon silently helped his cousin up and took his place at her side.

"It is Folly in front and Wisdom behind," cried Sarah, laughing. "Everybody will think you have broken your

arm, Uncle Dan, to see you sitting there so meek and mild beside Aunt Rachel."

A fresh hymn-book had been introduced in the old church since the childhood of Gideon Leigh and Sarah Thornborough, and the copper bowl had long ceased to be used for the collections. The cousins were both tall enough now to see over the moreen curtains, which had been lowered in Miss Thornborough's corner because she said they made her feel "stuffy," but when the congregation sat down, the family were as completely hidden as ever. The sermon being of unusual length, Gideon hunted up "Olney Hymns" and handed the book open to Sarah at the old familiar page of "The Kite ; or, Pride Must Have a Fall."

"I know it by heart," she whispered, giving him smile for smile.

Then Gideon took up an old Bible lying on the cushion beside him ; it fell open at the book of Genesis. A verse caught his eye ; he slowly passed the Bible toward his cousin, keeping his finger on the verse. Sarah read :

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

She looked in his face and whispered :

"Did anyone love Aunt Rachel like that ?"

It seemed to her cousin impossible that she should misunderstand, yet he knew there was no shadow of pretence in Sarah's nature, and that she had indeed missed his meaning.

"No, dear," he sighed, closing the Bible. "I will explain another time."

Then Sarah opened her Bible at her favorite life of Gideon, and turned over the chapters.

Presently she pointed to the lines, "As thou art, so were they ; each one resembled the children of a king."

"I am always glad Uncle Dan brought us up to be like that, aren't you ?" she whispered.

Her cousin nodded.

"As the man is, so is his strength," were the next lines her

finger stopped at. "That is why you are so strong. 'He died in a good old age.' I hope you will live to a good old age, dear boy."

He smiled, and laid his hand upon hers.

"Hush!" he said. "You are as bad as when you were a baby. Aunt Rachel is looking horrified."

When service was over Dan Thornborough and his party stood about longer than usual, greeting their acquaintances. Some of the Leighs, Gideon's uncle and cousins, joined them, and some of the Howards.

"What are we to conclude from your being Jehu this morning, with Sarah beside you?" asked one of them facetiously.

"Oh, nothing. My uncle wished it. I dare say I shall not do it again," returned Gideon carelessly.

"I am going to drive home!" announced Sarah, when, in a few minutes, the coach came up. Nobody made any objection, so Sarah climbed up. "Sit by me going back," she implored of her uncle.

So Gideon took his place by his aunt, and the Frants having been packed within and without, away they started down the road.

"What a curious survival!" a visitor new to the neighborhood remarked to a Howard. "How long will it all last, I wonder?"

A few days later an enemy began to attack Sir Godolphin Leigh. Gout. He was very angry, and still more so when his doctor ordered him to take foreign waters. But after much persuasion he agreed to go, provided that his son would go with him as well as his wife.

"Symes must look after things. Eh? What? Incompetent? I don't care, lad, I am not going to stir without you. If you and Sally had made it up, I should have had to do without you, but as you are such a shilly-shally you may as well wait now until we get back. God bless my soul! you can pop the question then as soon as you like, and we'll have the wedding before Christmas."

So his son reluctantly consented. It was late autumn before they returned to Leigh Court, and it was early in an unusually cold December before Gideon betook himself to stay at Meads, resolved that he would remain there till he had made Sarah understand his wishes by one means or another.

The Meads drawing-room was a particularly attractive place on a winter evening. Miss Thornborough and her brother each had a special chair near the fire, with lamp and table beside it. A long, old-fashioned sofa, piled with cushions, faced the hearth, and an enormous Spanish leather screen, placed round the door, kept off all draught. It was Dan Thornborough's invariable custom in the winter to dress early, and settle himself here to read for an hour before dinner. It was the hour Gideon and Sarah had loved best as children; it was the hour now that they always endeavored to spend with him. Their aunt seldom appeared till five minutes before the dinner-bell rang.

Here one evening came Sarah as usual, and drawing up a low chair to the fire, proceeded to warm her feet, screening her face with a fan, and relating the events of the afternoon's skating expedition to her uncle.

The firelight shone upon her white dress and danced upon a string of opals, a Thornborough heirloom, which was round her throat. Her uncle placed his book on the table beside him, took off his glasses, and, resting an arm on each elbow of his chair, gave her his full attention.

Presently Gideon came in, also dressed for dinner, and cast his long length on the sofa behind his cousin. She continued speaking :

"He spent all day with us. He was so kind. He had a sad, stern face. He said he made agricultural implements."

"Did he?" cried Gideon. "I never knew that. Supposing you had spent the afternoon with Houseman or one of his men, how queer we should have thought it! One can talk to such odd people abroad."

"Odd?" said Sarah. "What was there odd about him?"

He was a gentleman, and quite as well educated as any of us, and much more interesting."

"Thank you!" cried both her hearers, laughing.

"Agricultural implements!" repeated Dan Thornborough. "It could not have been Lawson himself; he is a capital fellow. What age was he, do you suppose?"

"Thirty-two," announced Sarah promptly.

"Too young. Lawson must be five-and-fifty, if he is a day. And so you found him interesting, did you, Sarah?"

"Awfully! Very, I mean. Actually more so than Mr. Gray," she added, turning suddenly round and looking mischievously at Gideon.

He frowned.

"I did not know you had been seeing much of him," he said.

"Oh, yes; he came ever so often when I was in town with Aunt Mary."

"You never told me," said her uncle gravely. "I understood he had gone abroad."

"Yes, so he has now; we saw a good deal of him before he went, though, and I told him to be sure to come and see us often when he comes back," she declared again, laughing in Gideon's chagrined face.

"I wish you had not. I told you before I did not like him," he said.

Sarah's eyebrows went up defiantly.

"I can't always undertake to dislike everybody you do," she said. "You have interfered ever so often with me lately. I wish you would not. I can manage my own affairs, and choose my own friends, without your help."

Her cousin flushed red.

"Gently, Sarah. Gideon is in the right," said her uncle.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I mean that Mr. Gray of Gray's Wick is not a suitable man for you to know; you may recollect that I have never invited him to Meads."

"I don't care a bit about him ; it is being interfered with by Gideon that I hate. If I like to talk to him as much as ever I can, when I meet him out, what has that got to do with Gideon ? I don't like my friends to be found fault with without cause."

"Your *friend* ! Good Heavens ! And 'without cause' !" ejaculated Gideon, getting up and excitedly pacing the room.

"What do you mean, pray ?" demanded Sarah, also getting up and facing him.

Dan Thornborough sat watching them sadly. Their passionate indignation came to him as an echo out of past years. He was pondering whether it would be worth while to produce his experience for their benefit. Sarah had dragged the elastic on which her necklace was strung till it reached her mouth ; she held the opals against her white teeth, biting them angrily. It was the childish action over again of biting at her curls, which action had always preceded a storm.

Gideon continued to pace the room in a nervous, annoyed way.

"What do you mean ?" demanded Sarah again. "I hate thrusts in the dark ; if you have anything to say against Mr. Gray, say it out like a man. Innuendoes are the weapons of a *coward* !" she added emphatically.

Gideon turned white, halted in front of her, opened his mouth to speak, looked at his uncle, then at Sarah, and said nothing.

"Have you ever known Gideon guilty of a cowardly act in all his life ?" asked Dan Thornborough.

Sarah continued to bite her necklace, her nostrils dilated with passion ; her eyes were flashing, she beat her white-shod foot impatiently on the floor.

"No," she retorted, "never ! But you see he has nothing to say. Why does he stand wavering there ? Speak, Gideon, can't you ?"

Gideon's eyes turned appealingly toward his uncle.

"Tell her as much as you think right," he muttered.

"Tell me *everything*!" she insisted, with a stamp of her foot. "I am as much grown up as you are. Really, Gideon, your behavior is perfectly ridiculous."

Then Dan Thornborough roused himself from watching Gideon's dark, tender face, and Sarah's angry, gleaming figure.

"Children, we desire to know, always to know. We do not ask whether we shall be wiser or better for the knowledge, we only ask that we may know what other people know. I will tell you, Sarah, why both Gideon and I object to Mr. Gray. Gideon has long known it, and it now seems to me better that you should know also. Mr. Gray has three children, and the lady with whom they live ought to be Mrs. Gray of Gray's Wick."

There was silence for a moment, while Sarah looked at the pained faces of her uncle and cousin.

"Like Charles the Second, in the 'English History'!" she cried scornfully, and the disgusted jerk she gave to the necklace broke the string and sent the beads shimmering along the carpet. She flung the rest after them.

Gideon stooped and began picking them up.

"Cad!" she declared again. "What a good thing we know! Now, pray, Gideon, why should *you* have been so angry about it at all?"

But Dan Thornborough had come to the conclusion that nothing would break the barrier that seemed of late to have been growing up between the cousins, unless some third person spoke plainly. He also felt that his revelation to her, made with pain to himself and Gideon, had merely conveyed to her a kind of historical fact.

He pointed with his long, thin hand to the chair Sarah had risen from, and motioning Gideon to another, he said with the ring of command that no one had ever been known to question or to disobey:

"Oblige me, both of you, by sitting down and giving me your attention while I relate to you a passage out of my past life. You are right, Sarah, you are no longer a child ; it is time you knew all that a grown person may know. You are a child in all that concerns affairs of the heart. I am about to enlighten you."

Gideon started, but said nothing.

"When I was about the age of Gideon, or a few years older, I fell in love. Her name was Dulcie. She promised to marry me. A few weeks before our wedding she broke her engagement to me and married another man. I and others had done our best to prevent the acquaintance, and were only met with the same kind of scorn as that to which you have been treating Gideon. He was well known as a gambler and a hard drinker. He had personal attractions and a persuasive manner ; she had money and was overpersuaded. We had planned our wedding tour abroad together. I had never been abroad. I never have been. Your father," he went on, turning to Gideon, "was more than a brother to me at that time. I remained here and managed Meads. Your Aunt Rachel's promised husband died about that time; she and I have lived here ever since, as you know." He paused.

Sarah was looking at him intently.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"All! Is it not enough? But I forget. I must tell you the end. He beat her, he cursed her, and I heard of it and was helpless. At last, one cold night such as this, I was sitting here in this very chair. Your aunt had gone to bed ; I was alone. There came a tap at the window behind you. I was always thinking of her. I knew who it was. She knew our habits well ; she must have known I should be here. I opened the window, and there on the terrace she stood shivering in the snow. I helped her in here to the fire, just where you are sitting, Sarah. I fetched her wine ; I warmed and restored her. Then she said he had beaten her so that she

had run away to me. She was no older than you, child, and I loved her madly, yet could say nothing. It was, in truth, an awful hour. You cannot understand that yet. Her paroxysm of resentment passed. She began to talk of going back. She would not let me call your aunt, and I dared not offer to drive her home. She went out by that window as she had come in, and I walked with her through the wood, and out on to the high-road over the frozen snow, and left her at her own gate. There we parted. I never saw her again, and nobody but myself knows of that meeting, for she has long been dead, and I have only related it to you now lest another heart be broken by another girl who in her ignorance passes by a love that has only fidelity to recommend itself."

He ceased. Sarah looked round, but Gideon had risen and gone quietly out of the room.

"Do you mean *me*? and that Gideon is in love with *me*?" she demanded.

"Even so," said her uncle almost absently, for his thoughts were busy with the past, and the fire of youth flashed once more in his eyes.

Then Sarah left her chair, and falling on her knees beside him, buried her face in his breast and cried :

"Oh, Uncle Dan, how sorry I am for you! Fancy her coming in here for you to comfort her, poor girl! It must have been very hard for you."

"*Hard!*" he repeated. "Hard! Ay. That hour was ever present with me for many a long year."

"How odd about Gideon! I never guessed. Poor Gideon!"

He stroked her hair lovingly, as when she was a child. He was moved too greatly to say more. They remained thus till Miss Thornborough, wrapped up in a white shawl, for she had been ill, came into the room, saying:

"What is all this about Gideon? He is gone, I hear."

"Gone!" cried the others in astonishment.

Sarah got up off the floor. She picked up a stray opal bead

and put it, with the others that Gideon had collected, into an enamelled box that lay on the table. "I'm sorry I was in such an awful rage," she thought penitently.

"Yes," pursued her aunt; "he told Young George to saddle Flash, as he was going back to Leigh Court for the night, and he was to tell you, Dan, that he would be over here again before lunch to-morrow morning."

"I see," was all that her brother said, and, the bell ringing at that moment, they went in to dinner.

Sarah stole downstairs again that night after she and her aunt had retired. She went back to the drawing-room, where she found her uncle standing by the fire, looking at a miniature. He silently held it out to her, and she saw the face of the girl whom he had loved all his life.

"How pretty!" she said, then laid her cheek against his in mute sympathy.

"Ay," he said, without noticing her, but still continuing to look at the face in the picture, "ay, when I looked for good, there came evil unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness. 'Yet men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them.' Sarah, remember this when the clouds pass over your life; remember that in time the wind will come and cleanse them away. You and Gideon have been to me as a pleasant wind, as the bright light. It grieves me greatly that you should have spoken so sharply to him. The spoken word can never be recalled."

"And it grieves me, too; that is why I came down again. It all seems so odd about his wanting to marry me. I can't take that in yet. But I think I see now how much he must suffer when he thinks I like anybody better than him."

"Good-night," said her uncle, closing the miniature. "Good-night, Sarah. If I have made you understand Gideon, I shall not regret having told you about this. Ay, the lad suffers. I have suffered for more than forty years, and I can tell you it is an ill thing to bear. Spare him if you can."

His niece kissed him and went thoughtfully away to her room.

At Leigh Court, about ten o'clock on the same evening, Fred Leigh, home for his holidays, was sitting reading over the fire. His father and mother had driven out to dinner, the servants were shut away in another wing of the house, his little sisters were in bed, his elder brother was at Meads. The night was bitter cold. He piled on coal, and stretched his feet into the fender.

Suddenly a noise as of horses' hoofs sounded on that portion of the gravel that, close to the house, had been swept from the snow. Fred lifted his head, listened a moment, then, throwing down his book, went out into the hall and opened the front door. Instantly a cold nose was thrust against him, and he recognized Flash. Peering out further, and not seeing his brother, he stood for a moment thinking.

"Where is he, Flash?" he asked.

She lifted her beautiful head and looked at him.

"By Jove, something must have happened to the dear old chap!" he said to himself. Then, seizing the bridle, he led the horse round to the stable-yard, summoned a groom, and between them they harnessed the light cart in which his sisters were accustomed to be driven out.

"Now, go off as quick as you can for Dr. Leslie. I am going to drive along the road to Meads till I find him. And look here, Tom. If you get back before us, just come along the road after me."

Thus he gave his orders rapidly. The frightened maids had come out with shawls over their heads to hear the news and offer suggestions. In a few moments Tom had galloped off for the doctor, and Fred was urging the sturdy little pony along the frozen snow. For three miles he drove, then, coming to the turn in the road leading on to the little bridge, he began to go more slowly, for a thought struck him. Was it possible that his brother had taken the short cut over the fields which would bring him out where the stream crossed the footpath, easily enough walked through by Flash in ordinary

weather, but to-night frozen hard, as also the slope down to it? Gideon never could have come that way; he had warned him, Fred, only the day before not to go riding across there. Nevertheless, Fred turned the pony's head, went up the lane, and there on the frozen edge of the path lay a black patch on the white earth—Gideon Leigh, with the cold, clear winter moon shining on his white face. Fred jumped down, raised his brother's head on his knee, and poured brandy down his throat from the flask he had brought with him. He swallowed it, but did not open his eyes. Fred Leigh was square and stoutly built, and for his age very strong. He lifted his brother in his arms, put him into the low cart, covered him up with a rug, and drove him home as fast as the snow-covered roads permitted. He arrived at the house as the doctor came up to it. They carried Gideon up to his room and put him to bed, but it was long before they could restore any vitality to his frozen body. The doctor said little, but Fred, anxiously watching his face, was not reassured by its expression. All the household was astir when Sir Godolphin and his wife got home. Nobody knew how it had happened; Gideon had not spoken. His father blustered and fumed, and was finally prevailed upon by Dr. Leslie to wait till daylight before sending for a great man from town for a consultation. The doctor would remain for the night himself, he said; everyone else had better go to bed.

"I should like to stay," said Fred, who had never left the room.

"Eh? What? You, Fred? Why, bless my soul, it was you found my lad; so it was! Monstrous sharp of you to remember the brandy, too. Stay, if you like. Pack him off, Leslie, if he is in the way."

So Fred stayed. The house became still at last. Fred never stirred, but sat with his eyes fixed on his brother's face. Dr. Leslie glanced at him from time to time with interest. Two o'clock rang from the church tower. Gideon opened his eyes; they fell upon Fred.

"Sarah," he murmured.

"Shall I fetch her?" asked Fred, bending over him.

"Sarah," moaned Gideon again.

"I will go and fetch her, old chap; don't you bother." And Fred left the room. Creeping cautiously through the silent house, he reached the stables. Flash stood there, the swiftest horse among them, the only one Fred had never dared to ride. He saddled her, mounted, galloped off down the road, forgetting to be afraid of Flash's well-known speed. Flash grasped the situation, and never stopped till she brought him up to Meads. Here Fred got down and made use of the simple expedient of throwing snow up at Sarah's window. She, busied with thinking over the evening's conversation with her uncle, was, for a wonder, wide awake, and at the second handful of snow she opened the window and looked out.

"Make haste and come down!" called Fred in a low voice. "Gideon has had an accident, and he wants you."

"Where is he?" cried Sarah, while her heart gave an awful, unaccustomed beat.

"At home. Oh, Sarah, do make haste! I want to get back."

In five minutes Sarah had huddled on her clothes, and, wrapped in a fur cloak, she came softly out of the house.

"Do you mean to say you have come on Flash? Bravo, Fred! But how am I to go?"

They looked at each other.

"The stables are locked; it will take such a time to wake up everybody," said Fred reluctantly.

"Bring Flash to the mounting-block; she must carry us both," declared Sarah.

"Oh, I say! you had better ride her; I'll walk back," he urged.

"Not if I know it, Fred; when you are as anxious as I am. Come on. I am going to ride like a man; there is nobody to see," she cried, as she sprang up.

"You guide; you are a better hand at it than I am, and we want to get back quickly," said Fred, as he got up behind her.

And they started off. When they had gone a mile Sarah said suddenly :

"Fred, I never told Uncle Dan. Shall we go back?"

"No, no; Tom can ride over early. You are a brick to have been so quick."

"Fred, is he very bad?"

"I don't know. I think so," he answered, with a catch in his voice which made Sarah shiver.

They rode on in silence. The stars glittered overhead; the fields, white with snow, stretched on either side; the clear moon made the world as bright as day; not a sound was to be heard except the thud of the horse's hoofs on the hardened snow.

How the cousins managed to reach Leigh Court they never knew. One idea possessed them both, and, they declared, the horse also—to the exclusion of danger and discomfort—the idea of reaching Gideon. Dr. Leslie, still watching by his bed, heard the door open softly, and turned to see them come in, bringing a great whiff of cold night air in their clothes.

Sarah Thornborough went and knelt down by the bed, and spoke her cousin's name.

His hand closed over hers, and he muttered:

"That's all right."

Sarah said nothing. She stared across the bed in wonder at Dr. Leslie. He put his finger to his lips, and the silence continued.

The next day early Dan Thornborough came over, bringing with him Young George, who had implored to be allowed to come, if for only the day. By the afternoon the great man from London had arrived, and was shut up for a long time with Dr. Leslie.

Sir Godolphin stalked impatiently up and down the dining-

room, waiting for their report. His brother-in-law sat staring into the fire, with his head resting on his hand.

"Eh? What? Here you are at last. How long before you can set him on his legs again?" demanded Sir Godolphin, as the doctors entered at last.

It was the strange doctor who answered him.

"Eh? eh? What does he mean, Leslie? Come, speak out, man. You and I have known each other long enough."

Dr. Leslie did his best to explain to his old friend.

"God bless my soul, Dan, do you hear? What's the use of having a fellow down from town if he can't give us a better report than this, eh?" and he stood looking from one grave face to another in a hurt, surprised manner, as of one who feels he is being trifled with.

"He may linger a few hours longer, possibly a day or two," said the strange doctor to Dan Thornborough, who had never spoken.

"Leslie, is that true? Eh?" gasped Sir Godolphin, seizing him by the arm.

Dr. Leslie only nodded. He, like everyone else, was very fond of Gideon Leigh. The father fell into a chair at the table, and buried his face in his arms; the uncle stood stiff, silent, like a marble statue, and received further details.

By the evening Gideon's old friends were in his room. One by one they had dropped in, and sat or stood about in hopeless sorrow. Young George sat by his master's head and supported the pillows. Jacob Frant and Fred Leigh leaned with folded arms over the foot of the bed; side by side sat his father and uncle; Sarah knelt at his other side, for Gideon had just recovered some degree of consciousness, and was speaking:

"I was thinking of other things, and I did not notice which way I had taken till Flash slipped. I don't remember any more."

"I'll have her shot!" groaned his father.

"No, my dear father, you won't. It was not her fault.

I guided her there. I must have hit my head against a stone. I am done for, I expect. I give her to you, Fred."

His brother made some inarticulate sound.

"George !"

"Sir ?"

"Do you remember our first rat hunt ? Put me up higher, there's a good fellow. Keep my gun. You have got it to clean, haven't you ?"

"Yes, sir," choked Young George.

"Fred, old man, was it you who picked me up, and shoved all that brandy down my throat ?"

"Yes, old chap."

"Father !"

"Eh, lad, yes, what is it ?"

Gideon made an effort to reach his father's hand. Sir Godolphin leaned forward and took his son's.

Gideon's eyes closed. Jacob Frant's voice broke the silence.

"How shall we give thee up, Gideon ? How can we spare thee ? Now is our grief heavier than the sand of the sea. Oh, that God would take me instead, and leave this young life ! Behold, He taketh away : who can hinder Him ? Oh, that one might plead with God as a man pleadeth with his neighbor ! Nevertheless He will not fail thee. Fear thou not, Gideon, neither be thou dismayed."

Down Jacob's tanned cheeks the slow tears were coursing ; his bushy eyebrows were drawn together, and his knotted hands were clasped on the wooden foot of the old-fashioned bed.

Gideon opened his eyes and smiled at him. "I am not afraid, Jacob. What fear should I have ? You have talked to me about this, at one time or another, since I was a small boy. I am very glad you are here. Uncle Dan !"

"Ay."

Gideon's eyes met his and glanced to Sarah.

"It was not her fault ; don't let her ever think so."

"I hear, lad."

"Dear old boys, sitting side by side," he went on playfully. "Look at them, Sarah ; friends of a lifetime. How awfully good they have been to you and me !"

Sarah never spoke. It seemed to her absolutely impossible that Gideon was going to die. If he did, of course Uncle Dan would die too, and very likely Uncle Dol. She knelt on beside the bed in dumb misery, watching now the face of one uncle, now of the other.

"I am tired. It must be your dinner-time. Go down, and come back again by and by," said Gideon presently, in a faint voice. "You stay, Sarah."

By degrees they left the room. Dan Thornborough was the last to go. Gideon called him back.

"Uncle Dan ! Give my love to Aunt Rachel. I know she would have come if it had not been for her bronchitis. I say, would you mind just giving me a kiss ? You used to when I was a little chap, you know."

Dan Thornborough stooped and kissed him.

"The crown is fallen from our heads," he said in a voice that trembled.

"Uncle, oh, *don't*, Uncle Dan !" wailed Sarah, suddenly clutching hold of him.

"Ay, Sarah, I have not forgotten you. We must try and comfort each other."

Then he laid his hand on his nephew's head, stooped, kissed him once more, and left them.

Sarah knelt on.

"Tell me, darling," whispered Gideon—"I have meant to ask you for so long—could you have loved me if I had lived ? You know now what I meant when I showed you the Bible verse about Jacob loving Rachel, don't you ?"

"Oh, yes, Gideon, dear. But I don't know about marrying you. I only know how sorry I am I spoke so unkindly to you."

"Never mind, dear. That does not matter now, nor does

my question either. I think you would have loved me," he said wistfully.

"Yes, I think I should ; you have always been my ideal, Gideon. Oh, how cruel and wicked it is that you are dying !"

A shadow flitted across his beautiful young face.

"Kiss me once, just once," he said faintly.

She did so. Then he lay still, holding her hand. Again his eyes closed. Scalding tears filled Sarah's eyes, and fell unheeded on to the counterpane. She made no movement, fearing to disturb her cousin.

By and by Dan Thornborough, followed by Young George, came softly in. He advanced to the bed, stood looking for a moment, then led Sarah away.

That was the last she saw of Gideon Leigh. His father watched by him all night, and he died in his arms.

CHAPTER II

"It's no use talking, Jacob. I tell you Miss Sarah don't feel his death, not anything to speak of, like what her uncles do, and the mistress, not to speak of you and me."

The speaker was Mrs. Frant. Her brother had "stepped up" to the house to enquire after her in a bad fit of rheumatism, and they sat together in her special sanctum, a small room off the great oak-ceiled kitchen.

"She is but a young maid; sorrow is new to her," he replied, busying himself with a new foot he was fastening on to his sister's work-box.

"Young! That is always your excuse for her. Eighteen is, of course, young to eighty, which I shall be on my next birthday, if I live. What do you say? Sarah is twenty. Of course I know that, considering I held her father at his christening. Our mother was to have held him, when, on the very morning, what does she do but sprain her ankle; so the old missis says to me, 'Pop on your bonnet, Jane, and come to church, for nobody but a Frant shall help in the christenings.'"

"Ay," returned her brother, "I was a little chap, but I remember. It was the day of the thunder-storm, when the oak was struck that the old master set such store by. Gideon did not favor him. He favored the master most. Poor lad! Whose turn will come next?"

"Yours, Jacob, likely enough. You are a main wiry man for your years, but you have reached your threescore years and ten, so you can't complain that's it's against Scripture if you're took next."

"Or you?" he returned with grim humor.

"I hope I know my duty better than to complain, whatever

time I'm took ; though so long as Sarah don't outgrow them almond cakes, and the mistress has pikelets hot for tea on a Sabbath, I trust I may be spared. I've tried all this while to teach that girl of Polly's—for the mistress says she shall take the place after me—but there, you make 'em light, as I tell her, and they are a pleasure to look at ; you make 'em heavy, and they lie that stony on your chest that you wish you had never been born."

"Ay," returned her brother, "there is a good deal in cooking ; 'tis the one thing in which the weaker vessel is stronger than us."

Mrs. Frant sniffed and changed the subject.

"I don't think the mistress ought to be quite so hard on Sarah, supposing the child did have a few words with Gideon, though I never heard what they was over, did you, Jacob?"

"Nay. But the mistress is breaking her heart for the lad. She'll go next, mark my words."

"*What!* Miss Rachel?" cried his sister.

He nodded.

"It's four months ago since Gideon died, and she has not left her room. You tell me it's bronchitis? It's not ; it's heart-break. The Lord has stricken her sore."

"Well, now, you was always shrewd. Take you as boy, or take you as man, I never knew a shrewder. Fancy Miss Rachel going before me, after all ! Dear heart, just fancy !"

Jacob had finished the work-box ; he got up and said :

"It won't do to anger Sarah—we must be patient with her ; the Lord is trying her sorely, and she is setting herself up against Him. There is more to come. His judgments are swift ; He trieth the very hearts and reins."

Mrs. Frant bowed her head. Nobody at Meads ever doubted that what Jacob Frant said would come true, and of late years he had spoken more in a prophetic strain than ever.

"How do you know there's more to come, Jacob?" she asked in an awed voice.

"How do I know when the rain is coming? When on a still day the air gives a shiver.

" 'Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?
Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
Can the rush grow up without mire?
Can the flag grow without water?'

If we would know His meaning we must watch His judgments continually. There is a new master coming to Meads, else why is Gideon taken? A creaking gate will hang a long time. 'Tis your new timber that shrinks. Sarah is as new wood, she must be seasoned; she must be tried in the fire, even as gold is tried. There is death in the air, but after it a season of clear shining."

"I'm main sure there can't be much 'clear shining' for us, if the master is to go, Jacob. It do set my teeth on edge to hear you talk sometimes," complained his sister, as she stirred her fire and drew her shawl closer round her portly shoulders.

"The old tale, 'Prophesy unto us *smooth* things,' " he returned grimly; "the women are all alike."

"They are!" she retorted. "All of 'em has too much patience with the men-folk. Considering your age, it do look unseemly of you not to give over saying things against the intelligence of them as had patience with you when you was no bigger than a lamb, and a deal more trouble, as I can vouch for."

"Well, well, Jane, I'm not saying but that females have their proper place in creation, and 'tis ill having words with those you have to bide with. Two sparrows upon one ear of corn don't agree long. I'd best be going. You have been a right good sister to me, and a right good servant to Meads. Tell Sarah there's fourteen chickens out to-day—that old Cochin hen has sat well—and I've got a basket of ducklings lying afore my fire in flannel. She had best step up and look at them this afternoon: it will make a reason for her leaving the mistress' room a bit."

"She's been sitting a deal too much indoors lately; it's bad for the liver, and makes you look all on the dark side of things. I'll tell her. There's the calves, now, Jacob—I might mention them; Sarah's always taken a deal of interest in the bringing up of calves."

"Ay, and there's the litter of black pigs; a picture they are, too. I was showing them to the master only yesterday; and all he said was, 'Tis two years to-day since Gideon and Sarah came home from abroad, Jacob.'"

"Did he, now? You don't say so! A powerful one for dates, the master always was. Never forgotten to wish me health, not once, on my birthday ever since I've been head of the kitchen. Going, Jacob? Well, the work-box is done beautifully. I'll see if I can't persuade Sarah to go up to your house this afternoon," she called after him.

The Frants were right; Sarah Thornborough was experiencing a new sensation, that of being unpopular.

Nothing would persuade Miss Thornborough that her niece had not been the cause of Gideon's death. This view she had dolorously supported to the many friends who came to discuss the event or to condole with her.

Sir Godolphin Leigh said little, which forbearance was due to his regard for his brother-in-law, and for what he knew Gideon would have wished. Sarah missed his blustering praise and blame, and was more wounded by his silence than by the outspoken remarks of other people. It began to be the version in the neighborhood that young Miss Thornborough of Meads had a very ungovernable temper; so much so that her cousin had left the house after a storm of abuse, and had ridden Flash recklessly away and met his end.

Miss Thornborough had grown irritable and tearful. Her bronchitis had tried her, and the death of Gideon had taken from her the one being she really loved. She had grown to be proud of Sarah, but to feast her eyes on her nephew had been the joy of her heart.

"Put some more coal on the fire and read me the death of

Absalom," she said to her niece on the day of the conversation between the Frants below stairs.

Sarah obeyed.

"Oh, Gideon, my boy, would God I had died for thee! 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,'" she repeated, wiping her eyes with her dainty lace-bordered handkerchief. "Where have you put his packet of letters, the ones he wrote from abroad?"

"Here they are," said Sarah, placing them in her aunt's thin mitten-covered hands.

"He wrote every week. It was a great pleasure to me."

"I am sorry I did not write oftener, Aunt Rachel; I never thought of it," said Sarah contritely.

"No, I dare say not. Young people are always giddy."

"Gideon was young, too."

"True, my dear; but he was an exception. It is a terrible thing to have hurried a fellow-creature to his end, Sarah; I trust you ask the Lord's pardon continually."

Sarah's face set itself into stubborn lines; she answered nothing. Her aunt closed her eyes and leaned back in the great white dimity chair.

"Will you be good enough to read to me the fifty-first Psalm?" she asked faintly.

Sarah took up her aunt's well-studied Bible and read the Psalm all through in as hard tones as her sweet voice was capable of taking.

"'Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it . . . a broken and a contrite heart . . . Thou wilt not despise,'" repeated Miss Thornborough in a weak voice. "'A broken and a contrite heart'—do you hear, Sarah?"

"Yes, I hear."

"It will be no use your going on doing your duty all day to your uncle, and fulfilling your obligations toward all our friends and neighbors, and toward our servants and dependents, unless you have a broken and contrite heart to offer. Do you understand?"

"I hear what you say, Aunt Rachel."

"Ah, child, when will you learn?" sighed her aunt.

"I don't know," said Sarah miserably. "Do you suppose there is much more for me to learn?"

"Yes, I fear so; and there will be no one to speak the truth to you when I am gone."

Sarah started, then suddenly sat down on a stool at her aunt's feet and stared up in her face.

"Why, you don't mean to say you are going to die, *too*?" she demanded.

"I hope so, child, I am sure. I do not care about living, now Gideon is gone. It would have been different if he had married and there had been children about the place again. There is nothing for me to live for now. You will take care of your uncle."

A pause followed, as though Miss Thornborough had expected some remark. Then she went on again:

"You see, child, it does not even occur to you to say you are sorry I am dying. And yet I have done all I could for you all these years."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, I am a *mass* of sorrow. I miss Gideon every day more and more. I have not got any words," cried Sarah wretchedly.

"I wish you had, my dear; it would be more comforting to me if you spoke sometimes. How else can I know what you think?"

"I *can't* talk," declared Sarah desperately. "Everything seems like an awful, black cloud. I think God is cruel, and I envy you dying."

"Vain words, and sinful, and unbefitting a Christian gentleman. We Thornboroughs have always been headstrong, but never rebellious or irreverent."

"Perhaps I sha'n't be so all my life, then; you always say I am a true Thornborough."

Presently her aunt began in another strain:

"There are those dozen fine damask table-cloths; you

would have had all of them if you had married. I think I shall send Mabel six of them; they give a great many dinner-parties now, since her grandmother died. The six with the ivy-leaf pattern, I mean."

Her niece nodded.

"Then there is the old Chelsea service. I shall give that to Fred. It would be a pity to divide it. Your Aunt Jael, Gideon's mother, gave it to me. I meant him to have it. It came from the Leigh side of the family. It ought to go to Fred. Just fetch me the scarlet leather case out of the top shelf in my wardrobe. No, ring for Susan; she can find it."

"I can get it, Aunt Rachel."

"I wish, my dear, you would let me think for myself sometimes; I am not quite helpless yet."

So Susan Frant came and fetched the case, and gave her mistress her medicine, and retired again.

"Poor girl! she felt the desertion of that lover of hers keenly," remarked Miss Thornborough, as she tried with trembling fingers to undo the case.

"That horrid young gardener, you mean! I don't believe Susan will ever marry, now. She says she shall always stay with us."

"With you, you mean, child," corrected her aunt. "See here; I am going to give these rubies to Mabel. She is dark; they would not suit you. Jewels are not highly spoken of by St. Paul, but neither must we waste those good things which God has given us. These pearls you may have."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, what lovely things! But I wish you would not give me presents when you are displeased with me. It makes me feel so uncomfortable."

A tap came at the door, and Dan Thornborough entered. He saw at a glance what was going on.

"I am giving her and Mabel my own ornaments, Dan; the family things you will see to. Are you disposed to read

to me a chapter from the 'Holy Living and Dying,' the work of that goodly man, Bishop Taylor?"

Her brother made no reply, but merely pointed to the book. Sarah handed it to him. It had lain on the table by her aunt's bedside ever since she could remember. Then, sitting down again on the low stool, she ventured to take one of her aunt's wrinkled hands in hers. It was gently withdrawn, so Sarah clasped her hands round her own knees instead, and stared gloomily into the fire. Her uncle drew a chair close up to his sister, and began his reading. The red case of ornaments lay in Miss Thornborough's lap; the rays from the afternoon sun danced on them through the west window, and on the gold of Sarah's hair, and on the silver heads of her uncle and aunt.

Dan Thornborough turned over the leaves, reading portions at intervals.

"'. . . Lord, when it shall please Thee that her (his) soul goes out of the prison of her (his) body, it may be received by angels, and preserved from the surprise of evil spirits, and from the horrors and amazements of new and strange regions, and be laid up in the bosom of our Lord.'

"'Of Anger. Use all reasonable discourses to excuse the faults of others, considering that there are many circumstances of time, of person, of accident, of inadvertency, of infrequency, of aptness to amend, of sorrow for doing it; and it is well that we take any good in exchange for the evil done or suffered.'

When he had finished, none of them spoke for a few minutes; then Miss Thornborough said:

"It is written, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' My sun is setting; it may be that I have been overwroth with you, Sarah. You are young, you have had a lesson; it may please the Lord to curb your hasty tongue, and to bend you to His will. I forgive you. Give me a kiss."

Sarah obeyed, then lingered.

"Aunt Rachel, I would give anything in the world if I were good like you."

But her aunt had closed her eyes, and her uncle rose to lower the blind, for the sun's rays were full on her. Then he returned to his seat by his sister and began to put back the ornaments.

"Send Susan with your aunt's tea, she looks overtired," he said.

So Sarah with a heavy heart went downstairs, pondering whether her uncle had chosen the passage on anger as a lesson to her or to her aunt, or only by chance. She felt as miserable as when she was a child and had pulled off the clematis in a rage in Jacob's cottage. Yet she knew that her uncle understood her; but since Gideon's death he had devoted a great deal of time to his sister, and she began to see now that it was because he knew they would soon be parted.

The days were growing long now, but the weather was very cold. She went down to the drawing-room, where the tea was placed ready. It was very cheerless; the fire did not seem to warm the room, and a bleak north wind was blowing outside against the struggling buds and blossoms. Some visitors were announced, and Sarah had to rouse herself to entertain them. One was a girl of her own age, who, while her mother went up to see Miss Thornborough, sat and chattered to Sarah about her own approaching marriage. She listened politely and tried to be interested, but was thinking all the time: "I wonder if she knows anything about funerals, or what it feels like when people give away their ornaments to you because they are going to die, or if she generally comes straight down from prayers to afternoon tea, as I have been doing for ever so many weeks now."

When the visitors had left Susan came to tell her that Jacob Frant had left word he wanted to see her; so, as her uncle still remained upstairs, she put on her hat and went forlornly across the fields in the blustering wind, and sought comfort in the contemplation of the young life among the animals.

By the time the north winds had ceased and the spring flowers were giving place to the summer ones, the stern, upright spirit of Rachel Thornborough had passed away. The week after she was buried Mrs. Frant followed her.

The two great women factors being gone, Miss Thornborough, as Sarah soon found herself beginning to be styled, discovered that ever-increasing demands were made upon her time.

Mary, "that girl of Polly's," was a staid, sensible young woman of five-and-twenty, and, having been for years well drilled by her autocratic great-aunt in all duties belonging to the kitchen, she proceeded to follow in her steps, with much devotion to her young mistress. Sarah took counsel with Susan Frant about the stores of linen, china, and those miscellaneous articles in wardrobes and cupboards which only accumulate in an old family which has dwelt for years in one house. With her rested the disposal of all her aunt's private property; it was with a sense of awe that she found herself mistress of so much, and she began to look back with a feeling of remorse that she had not better understood the methodical mind of her aunt, that it had never occurred to her to be interested in this more especially womanly side of the great household, of which she was now one of the heads.

"What is all this box of old yellow lace kept for, do you suppose?" she asked, when she was overlooking chests and wardrobes.

"It is very old lace, Miss Sarah. That piece you have in your hand has been the christening robe in your family for generations. Master Gideon was the last to wear it; the mistress told me she lent it to Miss Jael; and that veil is the finest old Brussels; the mistress sent it up for Mrs. Meakin to be married in. She was keeping it for you next."

Sarah sighed.

"Why didn't she ever show me these things herself, Susan?"

"I don't know, my dear. You were always out and about

the place with the master. She said to me one day that she thought you did not care for old things. One day when I were helping her lay them all in fresh tissue-paper, Master Gideon came up in his riding-boots and sat here knocking about with his whip ; he was looking for you. The mistress showed him that veil, and told him she hoped you would wear it next ; and he give her such a kiss, and said, ' You are a trump, Aunt Rachel ; I don't believe there was ever such a housewife.' And I don't believe there ever was, my dear."

Sarah unlocked and dived into another drawer, and from its depths said, in a choking voice :

"Don't tell me any more of these tales, Susan. I've been a selfish, inconsiderate pig to Aunt Rachel. No wonder she was fondest of Gideon. Look here, did she want this flowered brocade for anything special ? Do you know whose it was ?"

Susan considered a minute.

"Let me see. Why, it must be one of the dress pieces your grandmamma gave her when she was going to be married. She told me she kept all the things locked in that drawer, just as when she had them. I never saw them. She told me one day when she found me crying about my own affairs, you know, my dear." And Susan winked away a few tears, as her young mistress spread the rich material out on the enormous four-post bed.

Lavender fell from between the folds in little showers on to the carpet.

"Get out the rest, Susan ; I want to see them all."

Susan obeyed.

"Oh, my dear, look at this pale blue satin with the bunches of roses tied with love-knots. They don't make such stuffs now. Poor dear ! And to think it has all been put away for more than forty years ! Oh, dear ; oh, dear !"

"Spread it all out. Put that yellow silk damask over that chair, and the puce poplin nearer the window. All Aunt Rachel's young life shut up in that wardrobe, all grand-

mamma's plannings and choosings spread out here for me to handle and stare at—I, who had no existence then. Who would have thought Aunt Rachel was so full of sentiment? Why did she never tell me?"

And Sarah Thornborough in her black dress sat sadly down among the gorgeous gleaming materials, and, clasping her hands idly in her lap, looked wistfully into the honest face of her nurse, and demanded again :

"Tell me, Susan, how is it she told you and never told me?"

Susan began to re-fold the blue satin carefully.

"You would not have understood," she said.

"Do children always misunderstand grown-up people, Susan?"

"Generally, my dear."

"Do they mind not being understood?"

"Some mind very much ; others don't expect it. You see, Miss Sarah, that is why the affection of grown folks for children is the most unselfish sort of love there is. They know the children won't give them anything back, perhaps not for years and years ; not then, very likely."

"Don't you think I give Uncle Dan back anything, Susan?"

"Yes. You see you have always run about with him, so you have got to understand his ways. But the older you grow, the more things you will find out, even in the master, that you never knew before, and that you couldn't understand if you *had* known."

Sarah's thoughts went sorrowfully back, as they had done many a time already, to her uncle's revelation of his early life to herself and Gideon ; also to his remarks about Mr. Gray of Gray's Wick.

"I don't think being grown-up is half as nice as being a child," she said.

Susan Frant brushed aside her tears in time to prevent their falling upon the yellow damask she was now folding up, and replied :

"We all of us come to that conclusion as we get on in life, my dear." Then, seeing that Sarah was staring hopelessly and forlornly out of the window, she added, "But we don't stop at it. We find presently there are still many nice things to see and to do, and we see the reasons for things better. Don't you get down-hearted, Miss Sarah."

Miss Thornborough's gaze travelled back from the window and rested on Susan's face.

"Why, you are crying! Don't cry, Susan, dear. I wonder if you are thinking of that horrid young gardener!"

"Of course I am," declared Susan Frant, through her tears.

"I forgot all about him, till Aunt Rachel said she was afraid he had been a great trouble to you."

"Just like the mistress; she was always so kind."

"Why *do* you go on grieving, Susan? There's you, and there is Uncle Dan—— Oh, I forgot. Perhaps you never knew about him?"

"Yes, I did; but it would not have been respectful in us to talk, you know."

"Well, there is you, and Uncle Dan, and Aunt Rachel, all setting their deepest thoughts on people they could never marry. And then look at dear, dear Gideon caring so about me. You heard, I dare say, Susan?"

"Yes, my dear; I always knew."

"I wish I understood," said Miss Thornborough, rising. "I wonder if I ever shall. You have known me since I was a little scrap of a thing; do you think I shall ever love anybody like that? Really be wrapped up in them. I should not care to feel anything less, of course."

"Ask Uncle Jacob, Miss Sarah; he has a wonderful way of telling you things. Why don't you ask him?"

"But what do *you* think, Susan?" her young mistress persisted.

"I think it's more likely that you'll come across someone who will feel like that toward you, than that you will feel so to them; that's what I think."

Sarah smiled for the first time that day.

"I should not like that," she said quietly; "those feelings ought to be equal, I should think. I can't look over anything more to-day. If Uncle Dan approves, I shall send some of that material to Mabel. Put it all away again. I shall want you to go into the town for me, by and by. Young George can drive you. Come to me for the list when you are ready."

Things went on very quietly at Meads for many months after the death of Rachel Thornborough. The summer was a wet and chilly one. The Leighs went abroad in order that Sir Godolphin might take the waters again. Fred joined them in his holidays, for, at any rate, he served as a tireless listener to the perpetual recounting of Gideon's perfections, and was winning way with his father by his sturdy common sense. Mr. Gray sold Gray's Wick, and went abroad. Janion, the great confectioner, bought it, and settled there, as Dan Thornborough had foretold. They gave ceaseless entertainments, but, owing to their mourning, Sarah and her uncle had not called yet. Mrs. Meakin had another son, and the precocious twins were sent daily to school.

In the autumn Sarah persuaded her uncle to take her to Scotland. The rector and his daughter joined them, and the expedition proved a welcome change to Dan Thornborough, for his sister had disliked travelling, and it had become a habit of years for her brother to remain at home with her.

Though they never mentioned it, both uncle and niece dreaded spending the first anniversary of Gideon's death alone together at Meads, and, on their way back, they accepted the oft-repeated invitation of an old friend of Jasper Thornborough, Sarah's father, to stay with him in Northumberland.

It was thus Christmas before they returned home again.

There were no rejoicings on Sarah's twenty-first birthday. She and her uncle had a long talk over money matters in his study, when he introduced her for the first time to the mysteries of shares and investments. Mr. Simpson, the family

lawyer, came over to lunch, and was closeted with Dan Thornborough all the afternoon. Before he left, Sarah learned that the half of her father's money was now hers, an equivalent to her share having been given to Mabel on her marriage.

"It will bring you in about two hundred pounds a year," Mr. Simpson told her.

It seemed to Sarah a vast sum, but she made no remark, devoting all her attention to the technical points that were being explained to her.

In the evening, when they were sitting alone together in the drawing-room, her uncle laid down his book and watched her as she sat opposite to him, busy over sewing lace and bright ribbon.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Making a pinafore for my godson. I told Mabel I was going to try," she answered, laughing.

He smiled.

"Do you know what that two hundred a year is for, Sarah?"

"Yes; for me to live upon, if I am ever left alone in the world," she replied gravely.

"And what do you suppose will become of my money and of your Aunt Rachel's? My father left everything to me, after the legacies were paid to your father and to your aunts, Rachel and Jael; do you understand?"

"Yes; you had the most. That was fair. You had to keep up Meads."

"True. The whole of it will come to you, by and by. That five thousand which has been settled upon you to-day is merely your own private pin-money."

Sarah let the work drop in her lap, and looked intently at him.

"Do you mean that Meads and all your money will be mine?"

"After my death, yes."

"I sha'n't want it. Two hundred a year will be quite

enough for me to go away somewhere and be miserable on."

"Everything will be yours, Sarah. I am desirous that you should know this, in order that, during the years we are left together, you may ask me every point you are in ignorance about, and make yourself mistress of all my affairs. I may be spared for many years yet, and we will not, if you please, refer to my death again, unless it be necessary. Time is already healing our sorrows. Your Uncle Dol has written to me to ask you to ride over there to-morrow when I go. I am indeed glad that he has, of his own accord, at last asked to see you at Leigh Court."

"So am I. I love Uncle Dol dearly, and he *must* know that I adored Gideon, even though I had not loved him in that particular way."

"He knows, of course. It will be all right now."

"Why should he ever have misunderstood? You didn't."

"Nay, that I cannot tell you. He happens to be more hasty than I. And then I have never been able to be properly angry with you, you know," he added with his most whimsical smile.

"You, darling? No. You only had to say, 'Oblige me, Sarah,' in your most kingly style, and I always caved in at once, and did your bidding, didn't I?" she cried, falling on her knees beside him, and stroking his cheek.

He kissed her smooth white forehead. "We have always understood each other," he said.

"*Rather!*" she declared heartily. Then, catching his smile, she amended: "Yes, we have. I do not often talk slang, do I, darling?"

"Not often. It is a poor habit, and in few cases is it more expressive than correct English. In you it would seem to me to be singularly out of place."

"Why so, darling?" she asked, rubbing her cheek against his shoulder.

"Because you come of a long line of plain-dealing per-

sons, whose *Yea* has always been *Yea*, and their *Nay, Nay*. People who have always kept free from the idiosyncrasies of passing fashions, and from the standards set forth in transiently popular pamphlet or novel. The graver aspects of life cannot be duly considered by persons whose conversation and thoughts are tinged by every ephemeral craze they see or hear around them."

Sarah fetched a stool and sat down at his feet, with her arms resting on his knees, and her eyes gravely fixed upon his face.

"Uncle Dan?"

"Ay, child."

"I want to speak to you."

"Speak."

"It is about what you told me of Mr. Gray."

"Ay. I knew you would ask me some day," he said, sighing.

"If I had happened to want to marry him, you would have forbidden me to do so?"

"Most assuredly I should."

"Will you explain to me all about it, please—all about the whole question? There is so much I do not understand."

Dan Thornborough was silent for some time. His niece waited; she knew that he was engaged in what Jacob Frant more openly called "taking counsel with the Lord," and that he would speak as soon as he was ready to do so.

The butler, a comparatively new importation from the Howards, came in to replenish the fire. He glanced with some curiosity at his silent master and mistress, piled on more logs, and went out again. It had long been his ambition to serve Mr. Thornborough of Meads, and no Frant could have been more devoted to the family than was Graves.

"Sarah," said her uncle at last, "you are not the first who has asked me to talk to them on these matters. They stir the thoughts in youth of young men and of maids, as is appointed by our Creator. It is as fitting that you should take counsel

with some older person you can trust, as it would be unfitting did you desire to obtain information from those younger in years than yourself, and whom you could not in reason expect to know more than you do. We are sent into this world that we may progress in Christian life. Christian life is not retaining ignorance of evil. 'Human innocence is, not to know evil. Christian saintliness is to know both evil and good, and prefer good.' I might have endeavored to keep all knowledge of evil from you and Gideon; it would not have been possible for very long, nor would it have been desirable. I do not regret that these thoughts have begun to trouble you, any more than I regret 'the blossom when I see the fruit hardening in its place.' These are partly the words of a wise man now dead, but they serve our turn to-night. Your ignorance of evil is past. I might have locked up my library and forbidden you both to see newspapers and have exercised a jealous censorship over all you read. I preferred to bring you up as heirs together with me of the kingdom of God, of which this world and its men and women are the portion He at present desires us to be interested in. I had no right to keep any knowledge from you, only to see that it came to you when you were sufficiently grown to deal with it."

Sarah sat staring at him intently.

"I wonder if every girl and boy has someone like you to talk to," she said.

"It should be so, child. If we elders accustomed ourselves to converse with young people on all their interests, confidences of a deeper nature would become as natural between them as they grew older. We cannot suddenly assume the right to speak to each other of these matters; we must have been in the constant habit of exchanging thoughts on many another."

He paused.

"Go on, please," she urged.

Her uncle looked at her thoughtfully.

"You lead a lonely life, child, in some senses. I wish you

had some woman friend you could have talked to. You do not seem to have come across anyone yet."

"I have you, Uncle Dan. I have always had you; I have never felt lonely," she said, continuing to gaze in his face in a rapt manner, awaiting his next words as though he were a prophet.

"You want me to talk to you about many deep questions, Sarah—about why I should have forbidden you to marry Mr. Gray, for instance?"

She nodded.

"Yes. And about Mary Magdalene, please."

He bent forward and again kissed her.

"It seems right that I should speak," he said, half to himself, sighing. "I think I understand you, child. I will do my best, and you must forgive me if I tell you anything that wounds your feelings."

"Whatever you tell me is sure to be what I ought to learn. 'There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak,' you always say. This is a time for you to speak, please," she said persuasively.

So Dan Thornborough spoke, and Sarah listened in admiring gratitude, for she saw that such speaking was not easy to him.

It was ten o'clock before their earnest conversation came to an end, and they rose to go into the dining-room for prayers.

After a Psalm, Dan Thornborough read a short passage on "The Duty of Parents to their Children." Sarah's somewhat wandering thoughts were recalled by hearing the voice she so dearly loved, reading :

"Season their younger years with prudent and pious principles ; make them in love with virtue, and make them habitually so before they come to choose and discern good from evil, that their choice may be with less difficulty and danger.

"For it is a great pity to heap up much wealth for our children, and not to take care concerning the children for whom we get it. It is as if a man should take more care about his shoe than about his foot."

Seven years passed peacefully by. Sarah Thornborough and her uncle went out a great deal. The temporary coolness, caused by Gideon's death, between her and their neighbors disappeared by degrees ; people agreed that she had been "very young," and that "accidents would happen." She was much sought after, and her uncle took a new lease of life and went everywhere with her. The daughters of Sir Godolphin Leigh grew up, and began to be taken to town for the season by their lively mother. Fred Leigh had, to his father's open satisfaction, no ambitions. He took a poor degree, came home, and settled down to manage all that was left of the Leigh Court estate, squandered considerably more since the few months of Gideon's energetic reforms. The old rector died ; the new one was a widower with a grown-up son, and the complication set in of both of them desiring to marry Sarah Thornborough, who did not desire to marry either of them.

The son was a busy London barrister, who took his refusal in a businesslike style, returned to town, and shortly after married the daughter of a judge.

"He only wanted 'a furniture-wife,' as Charles Lamb calls them," said Sarah, laughing, to her aunt Mary, who was trying to scold her for refusing him. "I have no doubt I should look well in a room, but I can do that just as well unmarried, you see, and Meads makes a much better background for me than his house could possibly have been."

The rector applied to Dan Thornborough for Sarah, all ignorant of his son's doings. Nobody but Sarah and her uncle ever knew of this last episode, so after her refusal the rectory and Meads continued to be as good friends as before.

It had become an established custom for the Meakins to come to Meads every summer. Their family of small children enlivened the old house, and Robin and May were growing less bumptious, for they were beginning to understand that on all country subjects they were profoundly ignorant. Dan Thornborough was kind to them, but not greatly interested in them.

"I never had but two children," he remarked to Jacob Frant, as the two old men stood one day near the barn watching Sarah's godson Percy fruitlessly endeavoring to lift the cat. Neither of them moved to help the child.

"Gideon would have laid hold of the beast by the tail or the ear and not minded a scratch ; he would never have been conquered. But this new breed of Miss Mabel's is a poor stock," declared old Jacob. "Five of them, now," he continued. Then, resuming his tramping over the fields at his master's side, he began tentatively, "Captain Janion's been here often of late."

"Ay," returned the other.

"We must all die, and are as 'water spilled upon the ground.' 'Tis eight years ago, and she was but a young maid. Gideon would have been a fine man by now, but so is Captain Janion, by what I can see."

"Ay," returned Dan Thornborough again.

Struck by the feebleness of his voice, Jacob looked at him. He was very white.

"Take my arm," he ordered. "Yon is the broken gate I'm having mended ; we can sit on the wood a bit."

They made their way to it and sat down.

Dan Thornborough passed his hand across his brow.

"I was giddy," he said.

Jacob produced a flask with cordial. He poured some into a tin cup.

"Drink that," he ordered. His master obeyed, holding the cup in a shaking hand.

"'Tis main hot for you to be tramping over the fields at noon," Jacob resumed, when they had sat for a while without speaking.

"You can do it, Jacob. We are nearly of an age."

"There's a bullock and a race-horse. Do you expect the same sort of work from one as from the other?"

His master smiled.

"I have always been a tough man," he said.

"And are a tough man still. It's tempting Providence to act as you do," grumbled Jacob. "Out o' nights with Sarah, too."

"Not often. Our dissipations are not often nightly ones."

"Then you've the Sessions to attend, and a dinner here and there, and the accounts of that charity school, not to mention the Board o' Guardians. Paul wasn't a patch on you, even with his care of all the churches!"

Dan Thornborough laughed.

"I could not do it all if I were not so ably seconded by you, Jacob. You have managed Meads quite as much as I have all these years. Then there is Sarah. She is really our right hand now, which is what I desired."

"I shall tell her to see more to you. You must sit for an hour after your meal at noon. 'Tis ill getting up at once and working, either with your head or your legs."

"Not a word to Sarah, if you please, Jacob."

"Wherefore not? She is no mimic miss to be scared, or a reed to break if you lean your hand on it," argued Jacob stubbornly.

"I must desire you do not speak to Sarah," he repeated.

"Then will you promise me to give over coming out in the sun at noontide?"

"Ay, you autocratic man, I will be careful."

They sat still a while longer. Opposite, under the hedge, haymakers were resting and having their dinner. Smoke from the cottages of Polly and of Ben slowly ascended through the trees. Across three or four fields further the ivy-covered gables of Meads rose between the broad-spreading oaks and beeches. To the left, in the sloping field, sheep were feeding, and in the far distance, ruminating near the pond under the willows, was a group of the prized Alderney cows. The well-kept road wound up the slope, and here and there the sunlight gleamed on the oak paling. Near the gate leading into the top field, with its great barns, stood a team of horses. The brass ornaments on their harness

glittered in the sun ; the wagoner lay asleep by the roadside. The gaze of Dan Thornborough wandered over the whole, taking in every detail. It fell upon the grasshoppers leaping from blade to blade close in front of him, and upon ox-eyed daisies and red sorrel waving on the edge of the ditch. Jacob's latest companion, a shaggy sheep dog, lay curled at his feet.

"It is a fair world, a very fair world, and all of it, as far as the eye can reach, is mine," said Dan Thornborough, breaking the silence.

"Every foot of it, and more besides," acquiesced Jacob Frant in a tone of satisfaction. "And a better kept and a better worked estate than ours you won't find in the whole country."

"Ben's second lad is a likely fellow, Jacob. You will make something of him, I fancy. I should like Ben's son to learn how to work the place. His mother was a Frant. He belongs to us, you see."

"He's a likely lad, take him all round. I've seen worse," allowed Jacob ; "but 'tis a pity he is not a better scholar. He's all for looking after the live stock ; but for casting an account he's as stupid as an owl after a good meal o' mice. Stares at you. I must get Sarah to take him in hand. He might do it for her."

"Ay," returned his master, gazing thoughtfully over the landscape. "Eighty years—child, boy, and man—have I dwelt here, and I shall go and see it no more. Well, I trust I leave no enemies behind, except that fellow Jones, who was so angered at my letting Ben buy that bit of land. But I think Jones is beginning to see Ben has as much right to a bit of freehold as I, if he can pay for it."

"When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh his enemies, even a son of Belial like Jones, to be at peace with him. Not that the Lord has had much trouble with enemies of yours, for, saving Jones and one or two of his kidney, you never had any," returned Jacob.

After another long silence his master resumed :

"I think you made some allusion to Captain Janion before we sat down. I wish to say to you that I do not expect to live to see Sarah married."

"Why not? Is the maid going to be another ten years over it?"

"I do not know; but I do know that I shall not be here another ten years."

Jacob grunted.

"There's many a fool the Lord might take first," he grumbled. "He had best let well alone."

His master smiled.

"Why, Jacob, you are always preaching that we should bow to the will of the Almighty. Now you are preaching against your own doctrines."

"Well," returned Jacob in a depressed voice, "it's not common fairness to expect the door to hang after the hinges are gone; and yet I can't say I'm resigned to the idea o' following you just yet. Moreover, Sarah would cut but a poor figure without one or other of us at her back."

"Ay, just so. Doubtless you will be therefore left when I am taken," said Dan Thornborough, rising very slowly from his rough seat.

Jacob Frant rose too, so did the dog, yawning and stretching himself. Jacob held out his arm again, Dan took it in silence, and they slowly began to cross the field in the sun. They neither of them spoke till they neared the exit on to the cart road; then Dan Thornborough turned to Jacob and, looking in his face affectionately, said:

"The real good-bys are not always said when eye looks into eye for the last time. Here, give me your hand. For many a long year you and I have pulled along together; many a pleasant hour we have passed together. I trust that I may be spared from causing trouble to others in my last hours. It is most likely that you will not then be with me, so, old friend, the fancy takes me to say 'Good-by' now."

Jacob wrung his master's long thin hand between his large horny ones, and the two old men stood for a moment regarding each other. Then Dan Thornborough turned and slowly, with bent head and hands clasped behind him, took his way up the shady side of the road toward the house.

Jacob Frant remained. He lighted his pipe very deliberately and, leaning his arms on the top of the gate, stood smoking for some time in silence. The noontide hour went by. The wagoner woke up and came along the road with his team; he greeted Jacob as he passed; the old man did not notice him. The haymakers started work again in the field behind him; one came on a message to him.

"Let be," he answered gruffly, without turning round.

"What ails Mr. Frant?" they said.

He smoked his pipe out. Mechanically he lighted another. Polly's youngest girl came after him:

"Grandfather, mother says your dinner is cold."

"Let be," he answered again; "I want none." And the child went away.

Presently a tear fell from his eyes to the dusty ground. He brushed the back of his hand over his face, roused himself, and leaning on his stout ash stick he walked away up the road and into the top field toward his own cottage. "Ichabod!" he said to himself, with a heavy sigh.

One day before the Meakins left, Sir Godolphin Leigh and his wife came over to lunch. Afterward, Mabel Meakin walked on the terrace discussing Sarah with Lady Leigh.

"I wish she would marry Captain Janion, and have done with all this uncertainty," she said.

"My dear Mabel, we should not like her to marry into a family connected so closely with trade," expostulated Lady Leigh.

"It won't do to go on objecting to everybody; Sarah is nearly twenty-nine."

"And if she were forty-nine, it would not make any difference," said Lady Leigh, laughing. "Certainly Captain Janion

is the only man since poor Gideon died that your Uncle Dan has considered at all suitable. Sir Godolphin won't hear of it, of course. I should have to talk him over."

"Sarah doesn't care a bit for him ; she sees, hears, and thinks of nothing in the world but Uncle Dan. It has always been the same."

"She is a fine creature. Look at her now, swinging the children under the copper beech up there. There is something rare about Sarah, though she is not strictly beautiful. She is distinctly the great lady, a very fitting head for a great place like this. I am most interested to see who she will marry."

"Nobody, very likely."

"My dear Mabel, what a preposterous idea ! It is her duty to do so. Of course she will."

Mrs. Meakin smiled placidly.

"We shall see. Do you not think Uncle Dan is getting to look very feeble ?"

"No ; I have not noticed it. Sir Godolphin was saying the other day, when he rode over to us, that, for a man of his years, he never saw such a seat as he still has. He is a splendid old man. Of course he will leave your children something handsome."

"I hope so. Yes, he is sure to do so. Uncle Dan has always been most generous to Percy and me. Oh, dear, Sarah has taken baby from nurse ! I must go to her : that is the one thing Sarah knows nothing about. Excuse me, Aunt Mary. Sarah ! Sarah, please give back baby !" she cried, hastening away down the terrace steps.

Lady Leigh stood and waited till Sarah, having delivered up her niece, came toward her.

"Mabel is in a grand fuss," she declared. "She is like an anxious old hen if you touch one of her chicks. If I can manage lambs and calves and ducks and chicks, why not babies ?"

"It is the human mother you can't manage, not the baby," declared Lady Leigh, laughing.

"Yes," said Sarah ; " I suppose that is it."

Late on in the autumn, when all their visitors had left, Dan Thornborough and his niece were also taking a turn on the terrace. It was a mild afternoon ; all the trees were turning to burnished gold, and the air was so still that they could hear an occasional acorn fall on to the gravel, and the rustle of a squirrel who was amusing himself in and out among the branches of the great oak at one end of the terrace. Tits were silently running up and down the bark of the Scotch firs.

Sarah said suddenly to her uncle :

" I wonder if it is likely that I shall ever see again that man who wandered through that Spanish town with us ten years ago ?"

" What man ?" he asked, putting his arm through hers.

She explained. Then he said :

" All things are possible, but it is not very likely. Do you wish to meet him ?"

" Yes, I must say I do," she replied frankly ; " only, you see, he was in business ; and since the Janions settled here, I seem to have heard so many theories against the social position of business men. And yet the only two I have met I like better than any others."

" I did not know Captain Janion was in business," said her uncle, with a smile.

" Darling, you know what I mean ; his people were, at any rate."

Dan Thornborough stopped, and stared at his niece.

" Surely, Sarah, it is not possible that you have been thinking of a man with whom, as a mere child, you passed a few chance hours ten years ago, and whose name you do not even know ?"

" It sounds funny, doesn't it ?" she cried teasingly. "*Of course*, I've not been thinking about him—except now and then, lately, some words of his have come across my mind. He said sorrow was part of our training, and that it was better to try to face it and be strong, than to be angry at it.

I did not understand then, but I do now. I think he must have been a strong man who had had trouble."

"What did Percy and Mabel think of him?"

"Don't know, darling. Did not ask. We all forgot about him directly. Except that I remember he gave my hand rather a shake, and said he hoped I should stop just as I was; so I suppose he approved of me."

"You never told me all this, Sarah."

"No, I forgot. He must have thought me rather queer. I remember I asked him if he was not lonely travelling without his wife, and he said he hadn't got one."

Her uncle laughed.

"That is just the sort of thing you used to do, child. Well, no doubt he has got a wife long ago, if he is worth anything. Clever, you said?"

"I suppose so. He was much more of a guide-book than Percy, and ever so much more interesting, and he seemed to understand several languages. I told you all about that."

"Yes, I remember now. It grows chilly; let us go in, Sarah."

"Then you would not be angry if I married a man in business?" she demanded.

"Marry whom you like, dear. You are not likely to go wrong. You will probably choose better for yourself than I could choose for you—now."

"He would like me to marry Captain Janion, I do believe," thought Sarah. "Naughty old man, I will *make* him speak."

She stood in the doorway when they reached it and blocked the entrance.

"You sha'n't come in till you tell me whether or not you want me to become Mrs. Janion," she cried, putting her face close to his.

He stood leaning on his stick and looking into her laughing face.

"Domineering, inquisitive child, I do want it," he said, smiling.

"I don't think the name of Janion-Thornborough would sound well," she said, putting her arm gently over his shoulder, and kissing him. Then she drew him within. "Come in, darling; there is a nice little fire, and you must sit by it; your hands are quite cold."

He submitted while she fetched him his slippers, helped him off with his coat, and made him sit down in his arm-chair close to the fire.

"Janion will be a most thrice-blessed man," he said. Then, taking her face between his hands, he regarded her lovingly, and repeated with a smile :

" ' Gay hair, more gay than straw where harvest lies;
Lips red and plum, as cherries' ruddy side;
Eyes fair and great, like fair, great ox's eyes.' "

"Flatterer!" she cried, kissing him delightedly.

Then he settled himself comfortably, and began to doze. Sarah went softly to the window, and stood there a long time watching the sun setting behind the golden beeches.

A few days later she was waiting for her uncle to come to her as usual in the drawing-room before dinner. It was a stormy evening, and the rain was blowing in sheets against the window-panes. The firelight danced upon her shining evening dress and on the rings on her hands, clasped loosely in front of her, as she gazed at the blue flame leaping from the logs. Graves opened the door and looked in.

"The master has not come in yet, miss," he said.

Sarah turned round sharply.

"Not come in? Why, it is nearly dinner-time! How very wrong of Old George to keep him talking so long in the stables! Do run over, Graves, and tell your master I want to speak to him at once."

Graves returned in a few minutes.

"George says the master left him nearly two hours ago. He went out by the lower yard door."

"Oh, dear! Then no doubt he meant to have a little walk

in the avenue before coming in. But it has come on to rain since, Graves. Where can he be?"

"Perhaps he has turned into the Lodge, out of the wet, miss."

"Yes, very possibly. Just tell Young George to go and see. Make haste!"

Sarah uneasily wandered into her uncle's room. The coat and hat he had in daily use were missing, also a rough old plaid, which of late she had made him wind round him if he were going out at night. She wandered out again, across the stone hall, glancing at the old clock, which marked the hour of eight. She paused a moment to look at the heron, a new acquisition which Jacob had captured and stuffed and presented to her. It was now fixed up opposite to the spoon-bill of her childish memories. She went to the hall door and looked out; the rain was pattering on the porch steps, and the wind had dragged down the creepers—they hung torn and broken round the pillars. A gust of wind blew the rain against her dress. She shut the door and came in.

"No sound of him coming up the drive; where *can* he be?" she said to herself.

Too anxious to sit still she wandered upstairs to speak to Susan Frant in the workroom.

Passing the door of her uncle's bedroom—that state-room of Meads, occupied always by the head of the house—she glanced in, to make sure that his fire was bright, and that all was placed ready for him. Her glance fell upon the great four-post bed; she started, for there lay her uncle, wrapped in his great-coat, just as he must have come in.

"Uncle Dan, dear, you are ill? Oh, why didn't you ring?" she cried, flying toward him.

But Dan Thornborough took no notice of his niece; he lay with his face on the pillow, resting on the palm of his hand. Then Sarah stood still and looked at him, and remained standing, stiff, silent, and cold, her heart turned to stone. Graves and Susan, searching for her and for their master,

presently found them thus together, Sarah's face as white, set, and immovable as her uncle's, nor did she stir or speak when the household came pouring into the still chamber.

Messengers went riding in haste to Dr. Leslie and to Leigh Court. Sir Godolphin Leigh and his wife came at once, and Dr. Leslie arrived soon after them.

Upstairs they found Sarah still by her uncle's bed, only that Susan had pushed a chair behind her, and she had mechanically sat down.

"Sally," said Uncle Dol tremulously, touching her arm. But she took no notice. The old man looked on the peaceful face of his brother-in-law and said, as tears, which he made no attempt to conceal, rolled from his eyes, "Why, Dan! Gone? Eh? What?"

Lady Leigh spoke gently:

"Come away with me, Sarah, dear."

But Sarah took no heed.

"Oh, Sally, Sally, my dear, you can't stay here!" cried Uncle Dol, in a heart-broken voice.

Then Sarah uttered a terrible sound, like some noble animal wounded to death, and fell forward on to the bed with her arms spread over her uncle's body.

It was soon known all over the neighborhood that Mr. Thornborough of Meads was dead, and that Miss Thornborough had not recovered from the shock, but was lying in a dangerous state at Meads, with a trained nurse sent by Dr. Leslie to help Susan Frant to nurse her. Sir Godolphin Leigh remained at Meads. The nurse was brought to him on her arrival.

"My niece has never been ill in her life; you must pull her through; do you hear? God bless my soul, she is owner of all this property and the apple of my eye! Complain to me if you have any complaints—but you won't have any. We are all in great trouble here, as Dr. Leslie may have told you."

"Yes, he has explained everything; I am so sorry for you all."

"Good fellow, good fellow! Eh? What? God bless me, you look a bit of a thing to come nursing! No more strength than a sparrow!"

"I am strong," she said, smiling.

"Well, well, be off to my niece. You must pull her through, mind! What are we to call you?"

"Call me 'Nurse,' if you please. My name is Jessie Hay."

Part V

THE HOME OF EDWARD HAY

"His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure ; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half-graspable ; his tread
Was Hesperian ; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres ;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes ;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
And stirr'd them faintly.
. . . O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou ?
. . . Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms."

CHAPTER I

"EACH man is a new soul in this world ; untried, with a boundless Possible before him. No one can prescribe his duties, or mark out his obligations. Each man's temptations are made up of a host of peculiarities, internal and external, which no other mind can measure. You are tried alone—alone you bear and conquer, alone you must be sifted by the world. What a man can do in conjunction with others does not test a man. Tell us what he can do alone. . . There is a false humility which says, 'It is my own poor thought and I must not trust it.' Do not be unnaturally humble. The thought of your mind perchance is the Thought of God."

Edward Hay sat reading this to himself over his late breakfast one foggy Sunday morning in November. He was in London lodgings. Two years had passed since, following close on his refusal by Flora Moore, his mother had died. He had then divided the slender family possessions between

his sisters, and after seeing Augusta duly married to Herbert Moore, and Jessie settled in a hospital to train as a nurse, he gave up Byron Villa and took a lodging in London. He was leading two lives. In all that concerned his business, in which he was now a partner, he was keenly interested, energetic, and enterprising ; in all that concerned his intellectual, social, and domestic life he was frozen and apathetic. He was as omnivorous a reader as ever, but what he read no longer interested him beyond the moment. He paid the few calls he ever made solely out of duty. Philanthropy he abhorred, pessimism he despised, enthusiasms he envied. When the aim for which he had worked and saved for ten years had come suddenly to an end, all his ideals had come to an end too. There stretched before his mental vision the long or short series of years which go to make up a human life, respectable, probably wealthy, but dull beyond all conception.

In this state of mind he had now lived decorously, amiably, and—outwardly, at any rate—successfully, for many months past.

There were plenty of things to do on this Sunday, but he did not want to do any of them. He could run down in time for lunch with his sister Ada, and have a chat with lively Tom King. Or he could meet a couple of friends who were going up the river ; the weather would probably be fine out of town, and they were expecting him. Or he could go round to another friend, manager of a department in a museum, whose rooms were full of strange cases and bottles, and over whose microscope they had spent many an absorbing hour together. There were calls he ought to pay that afternoon at one or two houses where he was always welcome, and where he liked to be when he once reached them. And there was a certain young clerk in the business, whose ambitions were outrunning his slender strength, whom he had long intended to look up in his private life. Young Felix Harding reminded him of his own boyish days ; he was making the same preposterous demands on life and on his own strength.

Edward Hay finished his breakfast, turned round to the fire, and went on reading. His landlady came and cleared away. The drizzle continued to trickle down the window-panes, the rain lay in pools on the blackened ground of the square, a milkwoman was clattering her cans at an area close by, and the bells of the gloomy church which towered at the corner were ringing for morning service. At Byron Villa he had always gone to church at least once every Sunday; it had been the delight of his mother to have him at her side, and there had always been the chance of seeing Flora Moore. Now he listened to the bells impatiently; there seemed to him to be no sense in their ringing. "Alone you bear and conquer," he repeated to himself, and sat for some time staring into the fire. The book dropped from his hand. He was not a man who found comfort in pipe or animals; since he resented the constraints of a city life, why should he doom any creature to the same feelings? The one impulse that had ever lain strongest within him began to stir him once more, the one thought that still had power to cause his pulses to beat one degree quicker.

When he had sat for some time immovable as a statue, he slowly said aloud:

"A boundless Possible before me! There is no one else to rout me up; I must do it for myself. I must have been created to be more than the well-conducted automaton I am now." Then he got up and proceeded to spread open on the table one of his most favorite books—an enormous atlas.

He opened it at the map of Europe. Out of England, Paris was the only place he had visited. Thither he had once or twice been on business for his uncle. He looked at all the countries, trying to think in which of them he would take his next holiday. A sense of the fitting connection of all studies began to strike him. Who so capable of enjoying travel as one who had studied many a language? Raising his eyes for a moment, while he mentally made a calculation as to how many months must elapse before he should decide

to take his holiday, his eye fell upon a book of his father's, the delight of his boyhood, but which for years he had not looked at. He fetched it, and, as he began once more to dip into its pages, the old charm came back; he was again a boy in the old window-seat of his father's study, with all the world before him, and all his life untried. Spain, Spain—he could go there at last.

“Spain never changes,” he read. “She has undergone far more than Naples had ever to bear, and yet the fate of Naples has not been hers. There is still valor in Asturia, generosity in Aragon, probity in Old Castile, and the peasant women of La Mancha can still afford to place a silver fork and a snowy napkin beside the plate of their guest. . . No people on earth are prouder than the Basques, but theirs is a kind of republican pride. They have no nobility among them, and no one will acknowledge a superior. They are faithful and honest, and capable of much disinterested attachment; kind and hospitable to strangers.”

Among his many and miscellaneous grammars, translations, and foreign books he thought surely he had something in Basque. He got up, rummaged in a never-unpacked box of books and pamphlets, and presently discovered a Gospel of St. Luke. Partly through his knowledge of the chapter in English, partly through the attention he had at one time given to this tongue, he read what his eye fell upon as he opened the little book, and suddenly, for the first time, the meaning of the familiar words became plain to him: “*Eta eztute erranen; huna, hemen da, edo han da: ecen huna Jaincoaren, erresuma guen barnean da.*” “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

This people had always both interested and fascinated him; what was there now to hinder his going among them? He turned to the map of Spain; he would go by sea, enter from the south, and wander, as the writer of the book before him had wandered, till he reached the district where a few

sailors and shepherds were still actually speaking the Euscarra language. A pursuit seemed to offer itself which could not disappoint him as his fellow-man had done.

He put on his hat and coat, went out, and walked for miles in the drizzle, through the squares and streets, thinking.

When the next summer came, he started off, in spite of a certain amount of ridicule on the part of his friends, who reminded him that it was much too hot a time of the year to visit that part of Europe.

"I know it is," he replied. "I like being too hot."

All through Andalusia he wandered ; now on foot, now riding ; but the time was all too short, and he had to return to London before he had got any further.

The following year he went again, and journeying by rail to begin with, he found himself at Madrid, with a considerable amount of leisure still before him in which to start again on the wanderings to which he had all the year looked forward.

And this time an adventure befell him.

He came one day to a harbor on the northern coast of Spain. Here he stayed many days in a dark and dirty inn, whose ancient walls the brilliant waters of the harbor washed. Here, on a broad balcony, supported by beams of black oak, he would sit drinking his coffee in the afternoons, watching the shipping below him, and talking to his host or hostess, neither of whom ever seemed to have anything to do except to lounge about and answer his questions.

There was a fine-looking sailor who attracted his attention by his unusual size and strength, and by his free and independent bearing. Once an equally fine and independent looking woman came and spoke to him. She had lost two front teeth and had gray in her hair ; a boy and girl were with her. He tried in vain to understand what they were saying, and turned to his host enquiringly. The Spaniard took his pipe out of his mouth and answered :

"They are Basques. She does not belong here, though he does. They came here when he married. Castora's home is

over the border in the mountains. Pedro makes long voyages, and she stays here. He is very daring."

Edward Hay went out for many a sail with Pedro; they became friends. One day there was a great storm, and trying to make the mouth of the harbor, Pedro and a mate were drowned, and Edward Hay and another were hardly rescued.

The following day he went to see Castora and her children. The dignity and patience with which she bore what was evidently a more than common loss, struck him forcibly, as did her simple pleasure at the broken sentences in her own tongue with which he was able to convey his sympathy for her and his admiration of her lost husband. When he left the harbor the thought was still uppermost in his mind, "I should like to do something for that woman; how can she support those children?"

In a few days he reached the mountains. All his life afterward he could recall that day, when, having toiled up a long, long road, he found himself among them at last, towering above and beyond him; while, turning his back on them, he looked down into France on the fair plain where the river, issuing from between the gorges of the here sloping range, wound itself into the sea. Lying among the billows of the lower slopes of the mountains were little villages dotted here and there. A great, silent, unfrequented country up here; peak after peak rising above and around, vultures soaring far overhead, boats like tiny dots floating on the glittering sea far below. All this he noted as he sat down on the grass, consulted his map and his compass, and decided that somewhere near should be a certain village just on the border, where he intended to stay the night, partly because it was only eight miles from the first little French town he was making for, and partly because he had heard that it was Castora's birthplace, and he had an idea that he might ascertain what hope there was of her maintaining herself there among her relations. He took some lunch from his knapsack and leaned his length comfortably against a tree which

seemed to have been felled without purpose, and equally without purpose to have been left there.

He gazed around him. The slopes of the mountains abounded in groups of oaks and chestnuts, brilliant broom and heath, while the dark green of the box-tree adorned every nook and ledge. Far below, the river was hurrying over detached rocks ; in some places the banks rose in precipices from the water's edge ; further on, expanding, there was room for patches of cultivation, where were rich crops of vines, melons, calabashes, and maize. Looking through his glasses he could descry far away against the horizon the sandy "Landes" beyond Bayonne, its cathedral towers, and the Adour flowing into the sea. The sun's rays were full upon him ; he lay down on the short grass and pulled his broad-brimmed hat low over his face, and saw the opposite slopes through the blades of grass on which his cheek was resting. Dotted about on that slope were flocks of silky-haired Pyrenean sheep, and a few goats climbing from rock to rock ; magpies and crows were flying and hopping around. In his own immediate neighborhood all was uncultivated, grassy, stony, silent. By and by, turning on his back, he again beheld a speck hovering in the sky above him, and was reminded that the vulture had already scented his lunch.

Long he lay there, lazily recalling memories out of the past history of this country-side, and of the wars that had devastated it.

"In hundreds of places the passes might be defended by twenty resolute men against a host of invaders," he remembered reading. "How exactly true," he pondered, looking around him. Then his thoughts turned back to the sordid and hated life at Byron Villa. How intolerable now seemed the recollection of that close, oppressive attic in which he had sat for hours, on days as hot as this, studying those tongues which it was now such a gratification to him to be able to speak ! How especially hateful to him had been the sultry day on which his sister had exhibited the tinsel fire-

ornament with such pride, and on which the ill-cooked dinner had been set before him ! Mingled with all that was so distasteful to him came the remembrance of his mother's ever-ready sympathy and unobtrusive affection. He sighed, and reflected, "One cannot get rid of one set of abominations without losing all the good that is mixed in with them."

Then, closing his eyes, fragments of thoughts passed through his sleepy mind in effortless order, quotations which he scarcely recognized as such, so aptly they fitted with his mood.

" ' Happy he

With such a mother ! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not bind his soul with clay.' "

"I expect some day, somewhere, I shall find her—that woman I have always been in love with.

"Yes, 'By these changeless heavens,' I know that she exists, somewhere.

" ' Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills
... doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in. We lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to.' "

" ' Sweetest eyes were ever seen '—where have I read that ? It is an echo out of a past dream, which surely some day will become to me a reality ?

" ' Quid brevi fortes jaculamur ævo
Multa ? quid terris alio calentes
Sole mutamus ? patriæ quis exsul
Se quoque fugit ? ' "

"That's true enough. A man can't escape from himself, but he can sometimes put himself into surroundings in which 'himself' has one more chance.

"I suppose this is a platitude, or perhaps it is that every saying becomes a platitude to a man as soon as he has proved its truth in his own person ; before that it seems to him quite a beautiful inspiration, and singularly applicable to his neighbor."

Then all thought seemed suspended, and he lay half asleep, absorbed in the sun, the silence, and the grandeur around him.

By and by, his face scorched copper-color and his body baked through, he got up and resumed his way. Toward nightfall he drew near to the little straggling village.

Taking a short cut down a dried-up water-course, he came out on a neglected grass lane skirting a wall. The wall enclosed a garden, and in the middle of the garden stood a white house half covered by a magnolia growing up it. Its green-painted shutters were closed, the border in the middle of the grass in front was grown over with rose-bushes. Spanish chestnuts, acacias, and a broad Judas tree swayed gently in the breeze, and cast long shadows over the grass. Facing him on a white board was written "*Maison à vendre.*"

Edward Hay leaned over the wall and stared. The words reminded him that the house stood in France, but he was amused at their futility. Who would be likely to come by here and see that this house was to be sold ? Who would want to buy it if any did come by ? He could see that the lane he was in led out on to the high-road through the village, the road which he would traverse to-morrow, and which should bring him straight by meadow and stream and poplar avenue into the small town of Bains. There was an iron gate in the wall. He opened it, went into the overgrown garden and round to the other side of the house, where he saw its name over the porch, "Los Granados." Then he began to wonder much that the house was to be let or sold at all, so magnificent was the view of valley, river, and sea from its vine-covered veranda, so balmy was the air, so sweet the scent from the roses growing on this side in abundance.

He turned and looked up at the house, white, two-storied,

balconied. Behind it rose the mountains he had just come down from. Before it on the slope lay the almond, the peach, the chestnut trees of the few houses in the village. Close to the road stood the ancient church, with tower and sun-dial and clock, and hard by were the whitened walls of the *paume* court, which he had observed was an indispensable amusement in a Basque village. He walked round the enclosure. A few yards from the house was a small, substantially built stable and room for a cart. He came out through the tall, narrow iron gate, closed it behind him, and stood leaning over the wall again. The last rays of the setting sun caught the vane on the church, the hands of the clock, fell upon the tops of the trees, and glittered for a moment or two on the brazen knocker of the house door. The landscape was flooded with yellow light. It shone on the waters of the winding river, on the backs of the cows beside it, and on the orange-colored skirt of the girl who was driving them. It shone on the stern face of Edward Hay, and melted it into a smile out of sheer sympathy with the scene. Then, as the light faded away, he turned to go down into the village, and said to himself, "I shall buy that house. I feel as though I had come home."

Before he returned to London he had completed its purchase, and sent for and settled Castora in it as housekeeper. Young Pedro and Brigitte were sent to school in the village.

Henceforth to furnish, beautify, enrich, and improve Los Granados became the great interest of his life.

It was springtime in the following year before he was able to revisit it.

One day, having been into Bains to consult with a resident, to whom he had an introduction, about buying some shrubs, he was returning to San Pascual, intending to walk home at night over the mountains, when into the train came a party of English people, evidently winter visitors at Bains. As he never spoke to his countrymen abroad if he could avoid it, he sat down with his back to them, and allowed

their stream of talk to pass him unnoticed till the clear, sweet voice of a girl, imploring for information which nobody seemed able to give to her, made him turn round and offer her the explanation. The party looked rich and well assorted and comfortable, quite British in their evident objection to his efforts to enlighten the girl. No doubt she was engaged to the dark-haired youth, beautiful as Apollo, who followed her every movement with adoring eyes. He observed them more closely when he came upon them again in the tram on their way into San Pascual, and could not help taking compassion on, and acting as guide to, the good-hearted little man who was evidently the leader of the party, and hopelessly at sea, now that the losing of a train had landed them all in Spain.

They seemed to him to be just like most other well-to-do tourists, the only exception being the extremely Saxon-looking girl with the clear, shining blue eyes of childhood, the masses of yellow hair, and the fearless mien and voice of one who has never been opposed either by circumstances or people. Her interest all that tiring afternoon seemed unflagging, and she entered into all she saw in a hearty manner, while her quick, dictatorial orders to the two tired children, and her distracting sweetness of manner to the Apollo-like youth afforded him more interest than girls ever inspired him with. One hour merged into another, and he found himself setting aside the object for which he had come into San Pascual, in order that he might pilot this little party of waifs safe out of Spain again. The situation amused him. Everybody took his services as a matter of course, except the girl, who, with eye or speech, thanked him continually. Now and then he surprised a look between her and the youth, and read her unconsciousness of his marked devotion. He began to wonder how such a girl could have been produced, and he sighed, for he thought: "There is nothing so beautiful, and, in its way, so perfect, as a young first love. It will be a pity if she does not understand him."

They all waited in some public gardens while the good-natured little man sent some telegrams, and, finding himself for the moment of no use, he turned aside, and stood staring into the fountain. The girl came to him, and, looking into his face with those childlike eyes, asked him to come and sit down on her bench.

"What a kind girl, and how simple!" was his thought, but his heart gave no bound. "The world will soon spoil her, and she will learn to pretend, and to be self-conscious, and to flirt," he thought, as he turned and followed her to the seat.

Later on, before going to the station, he piloted, at their request, some of the party to a shop. It pleased him to serve the girl so full of gratitude, so, lighting a cigarette, he waited outside the shop. A sense of having always known her had come over him during the few hours he and she had been thrown together. He could have foretold that she would in a few minutes come outside to look for him, though when she did come, and asked him why he had waited, all he replied was: "Your brother-in-law would get cheated without me."

Then suddenly she asked him about his occupation, and her question brought him down to London life and its social standards, and he and she seemed no longer kindred spirits wandering unfettered, but were once more girl and man, liable to be judged by the narrow standards out of which he had lifted himself into the freedom of his mountain home.

"To know my business would not interest you," he replied, stiffening, for he felt that the languid, elegant woman, her sister, was only tolerating his chance company for the sake of the use he was to her husband.

What a talisman was a word! he kept thinking. Could he have said he was a colonel, an admiral, a civil servant, or half a dozen other things, he would have been looked upon as an equal without more ado; but to say "I am in business" would probably mean that a whole process of wondering, or proving, or excusing, would be mentally gone through before

they would accept him on his own merits. Before Flora Moore's rebuff on this score, his position had never for a moment troubled him. It had never occurred to him that he was not any man's equal; but she had vulgarized the world for him. He did not intend to give this outspoken girl an opportunity of doing it again. He had long known that it had been his curse to love Flora Moore.

But this girl presently surprised him with her talk about drawings and machines. Evidently she had been brought up to admire and to participate in labor; it gave him comfort to talk with her. "Do you live on your own land, as we do?" she asked him. Probably, then, she was not only rich, but came of a family who would be ingrained with honorable characteristics of their own, so different from the veneer on many of the rich mushroom families he had been thrown with.

"For manners are not idle, but the fruit of loyal nature and of noble mind," he reflected, while she stepped along at his side across the square, and they guided the tired children between them. Then she stopped to admire the night, and he, letting loose his thoughts, as to an appreciating friend, quoted poetry to her, and then wished he had not done it. How strange and daring she looked to him, who had been so steeped in disappointments and small annoyances, as she stood beside him in her splendid young strength and announced, "I do not intend to have any trouble!"

For the first time in his life it occurred to him that it might be worth while to have seen the ups and downs of life, to have tasted all its bitterness and all its disappointments, if it could enable him to stand as a support to impetuous, daring souls like this. He replied, "It would be better to learn to meet it bravely, and be strong in spite of it." And she looked at him as though he spoke in a foreign tongue.

She laughed at his definition of the place where he lived, and he was conscious of feeling "ridiculously sensitive," as Herbert Moore often called him. When they reached the station

something stronger than himself urged him out of his habitual reticence to say, "I hope you will remain just as you are"; and he felt as though he might as well have uttered the words to a baby for all the comprehension of them that lay in her fair, eager face, as she pitied him for pursuing his journey alone. Yes, no doubt to this joyous young creature to be *alone* would be the one possible horror.

As he recrossed the square after parting from them, he glanced at the card the little man had given him—"Meakin," and the address of a London club. "A foolish name," he thought, as he tore it up and threw away the pieces. His own card he had seen accidentally dropped by Mr. Meakin.

"Sarah," the children had called the girl. A noble young creature; the simple name suited her, he thought.

The years slipped by. Edward Hay's oversensitiveness and his irritable views of life disappeared. Los Granados had healed him. As time went on he was able to take a longer holiday. Sometimes one friend, sometimes another, came out to Los Granados with him.

One early summer he invited out his sisters and their husbands and one or two of their children. They came by sea as far as Bordeaux, and arrived in the mountains an unusually sweet-tempered, enthusiastic collection of beings. Castora welcomed and spoiled Ada King's boys, and Augusta's shy little girl was the pet of the village during her stay.

"Well, Ned, we have chaffed you enough about your 'den in the mountains,'" cried the now portly Tom King, one afternoon when the whole party were sitting on the veranda enjoying their coffee, "but, upon my word, I call this a paradise, a regular Garden of Eden. It only wants an Eve to be perfect."

"My dear fellow, you forget; it was Eve who did the mischief, and got him turned out," laughed Herbert Moore, who was exhibiting to his little girl a lizard he had caught on the wall, and which now peeped out from between his fingers.

"Give me some more coffee, Ada, please?" asked Edward Hay of his sister, who was presiding.

Mrs. King beamed upon him as in the old days, and filled up his cup.

"What a capital housekeeper this woman makes!" she said. "I expect she and 'Eve' will have words when you bring her here."

"Why should I bring anybody into my Eden?" he asked, laughing. "I'm getting quite an old gentleman now, am I not, Jess?"

The timid child looked at him.

"Not *very* old. You have got more gray in your hair than father, and mother has none."

They laughed.

"Uncle Ned ought to have gray in his hair; he is master of all this place, and is a very wise, clever man," answered her mother.

"Don't, Augusta; the child will be terrified of me."

"No," said little Jess, looking up in her mother's face, "he isn't *very* wise—not wise so as you are frightened; he gave me this," and she touched the string of lapis lazuli beads round her neck.

"There, Ned; there's a triumph for you," cried Herbert Moore.

"How well Jessie seems to be getting on! But I wish she were not so proud," Edward Hay remarked. "I wanted her to come out here too, but she would not let me stand treat, and of course she can't afford the journey out of her nurse's pay."

"Just like you, Edward, dear. Never mind. She is quite happy, and such a darling little nurse," declared Mrs. King.

"You seem to be quite an authority about here, Ned," began Herbert Moore. "Down in Bains the English colony seem to count upon you for organizing all their expeditions, and for getting up all their amusements, when you are here. We have been hearing a lot about you at the club this morning. Everybody thinks you are enormously rich."

"Yes, I know they do. I have grown into all the interests of the place. It is quite true," he said.

"I like to hear them call you 'Monsieur Edouard.' I suppose *Hay* is a troublesome word for foreigners," began Tom King. "And, I say, I counted, and within the last three days there have been seven sets of pedestrians stopping here for information about the mountain passes. I believe some of them only did it for a chance of having a look at your garden, or seeing if you were not going to ask them in for coffee and a rest."

"I dare say," laughed Edward Hay. "I often do. *Castora* does not always approve ; she never allows me to be imposed upon."

"I suppose you never let your house at this time of the year, do you?" asked Augusta.

"*Dios mio*, no!" he said energetically ; "no, indeed ; I always want it myself."

"Where does *Castora* go when you let the place?" she asked again.

"She goes down to Bains and hires herself out as cook to the Spanish families who go there for the summer sea-bathing. She has a genius for cooking, and is very much sought after, I can assure you."

"I'm not surprised," said Ada King. "She seems perfectly devoted to your interests. I can't think how you dared to start having a foreigner, though."

"It was all quite simple. I had taken a great fancy to poor Pedro. Also I knew the characteristics of her race," he replied. "They are extremely pious, too. I dare say you noticed, Tom, that when the Angelus sounded when we were in the Bains market yesterday, every man raised his cap and stopped short in his bartering over pig or ox?"

Tom King nodded.

"That does not apply all over France, I imagine," he said.

"Who did you let to last year?" demanded Augusta, pursuing her subject.

"I forget. The agent managed it."

"*His agent!* Hark!" cried Ada King, laughing. "Who

would have thought in the old days of our Edward having *an agent at his disposal?* ”

“ Which old days ? The days when our grandfather was also a man of means ? ” he asked her.

“ Yes. Now is not that an example of the way in which the fortunes of a family are judged ? ” moralized Herbert Moore. “ You have but lifted yourself up again into your rightful position, Ned, while here are these dear illogical women remembering only the days of their hewing of wood and drawing of water.”

“ Let us forget them,” he replied gravely; “ I should be sorry to be poor again. Poverty has its uses, but it is apt to dwarf a man’s very soul.”

“ That’s true enough, Ned, my boy. No one of us has had such a bitter pill to swallow as you. And a good thing, too, for I’m bound to say not one of us could have swallowed it with such an amiable countenance as you did.”

“ Quite true, Tom, dear,” cried his delighted wife. “ Gus and I never minded half as much as he did. I’m sure nobody deserves riches and success so well as Edward; he has made his own life. I call him splendid ! ”

Her brother laughed.

“ How you do spoil a man ! ” he said. Then, after a pause, he turned to Herbert Moore and asked, “ What news have you from Flora ? ”

Mrs. King and Mrs. Moore glanced at each other. He had never mentioned Flora since the old days.

“ She is well, and I suppose happy. Green is kind to her, and she likes India,” returned Herbert Moore, who had suffered too much from Flora at home to be overfond of her.

“ Ah ! I am glad of that. How long ago it all seems ! ”

“ It does,” replied Herbert Moore. Then, seeing that his brother-in-law had purposely opened the conversation, he added, as he stretched himself out at his ease in his cane seat, “ Yes, all these things seem ages ago. Now, I consider we have all arrived at the most comfortable period of the life of

man ; all our follies, all our mistakes behind us, and a fair share of years left before us to use our wisdom in, on behalf of our children."

"A pleasing reflection—especially for me," remarked Edward Hay dryly.

Tom King burst out laughing.

"You made a wrong end to your peroration, Herbert. You might have finished up with, 'on behalf of others,' then that would have included old Ned. I don't fancy bachelors relish hearing such paternal purrings as yours and mine are apt to be."

"We count in Ned, of course ; there is a sort of universal fatherhood about him," grumbled Herbert Moore.

"You are not very lucid," said Edward Hay, laughing ; "but I dare say you know what you mean yourself. Do not agitate your kind selves about my bachelor condition. I have no doubt I shall change it when I see anybody that interests me sufficiently."

"How nice !" sighed Ada King in her simple motherly way.

"Have you ever seen anybody that interested you lately ?" demanded Augusta.

"Oh, yes," he replied cheerfully.

"Who ? Tell us !" cried his sisters eagerly.

"I don't know," he said, amusing himself by watching their excitement.

"Oh, you are a tease ! Where did you see her ?"

"In a railway train."

"Well ?" they cried breathlessly.

"Well," he repeated, laughing, "it was ten years ago ; that is all."

"Don't you know her name ?"

"Yes. Sarah."

"Sarah—what ?"

"I have not the least idea."

"I dare say it was some little child," declared Augusta,

leaning back in a disappointed manner. "And such a horrid, ugly name, too!"

"No, she was a tall creature of eighteen; English."

"Come, that is satisfactory," said Ada King.

"Never seen her since?" asked her husband.

"Never; and never likely to. She is probably married long ago to the Greek god who was one of the party."

Everybody laughed.

"Well," sighed Mrs. King, "you might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay as expect to meet her again, and unmarried, and be lucky enough to fall in love with each other. So your chances of matrimony are as remote as ever, I am afraid."

"Exactly. Just what I think myself, my dear Ada."

The following spring, for the first time at that season of the year, his agents received permission from Mr. Hay to let Los Granados, if they could. The three brothers-in-law had planned to take their holiday together in Italy. But, shortly before the time fixed for starting, the young man Felix Harding fell seriously ill at last. On going to see him (in a home the very repetition of Byron Villa, kept up on means far smaller), Mr. Hay discovered that, in the doctor's opinion, there was little chance for him but to go at once to a warmer climate.

"He might as well have told me to go to the moon," said the young man. "And how is my mother going to be kept, I should like to know?"

Mr. Hay sat down, and then and there told him that he should take him out to Los Granados as soon as he could travel.

There was nothing overstrung or overreticent about Felix Harding. It was easy to help him. It had been the delight of his life to work under Mr. Hay, and the prospect of merely being in his society was like a tonic to him.

Mr. Hay suddenly remembered, on his way back to his rooms, the permission he had given to his agents. He went into a telegraph office and sent them a message.

The reply came back : "Too late ; house let ; parties already started."

Mr. Hay was annoyed, but nevertheless he wrote to Tom King, telling him he must find another man to go with them.

"I shall take Harding to Bains ; it is sheltered enough. It will be a distinct bore to be so near, and to be unable to get into my own house," he pondered. "But when the people are gone, I shall take him up there, and leave him with Castora for the summer, poor chap."

So he, with much patience and care, at last got his sick charge safely to Bains, and there established himself in some rooms overlooking the small quay, where the sunshine poured in most of the day, and where Felix could watch from his sofa the passers-by and the sardine-boats coming in.

Everybody rejoiced that Mr. Hay had come back again. There were some pleasant people at the hotel, and his old friends, the retired French colonel, the intelligent Basque curé, and the Spanish head of the bank welcomed him with effusion, delighted at the chance which had obliged him to dwell in Bains itself for the next two months. Mr. Hay said he was not at all delighted ; that he grudged Los Granados to everybody when he wanted it himself, and especially grudged Castora as his tenant's cook just when he required her as nurse for Felix Harding.

CHAPTER II

ONE glorious afternoon, when the air was full of the scents of blossoming trees and flowering shrubs, when every window was thrown open, and every invalid in Bains was sunning himself on the *Plage*, when women sat before their doors roasting coffee berries, and children were coming home from school without their winter jackets, Mr. Hay was returning from a walk along the cliff. He had been up to the golf-ground, and was hastening back to induce Felix Harding to go within doors before sunset. His nearest way lay through the little cemetery on the side of the hill. He was striding through it, the dazzling sun in his face, when from behind a high stone monument a lady suddenly stepped off the grass on to the path in front of him. He drew aside to allow her to pass, but she stood still, staring in his face. Then suddenly she cried in English :

“ Oh, I do believe it is you ! ”

Her voice recalled some memory. He looked at her searchingly, lifting his hat. She was in deep mourning. He did not remember her. He said nothing.

“ You have forgotten,” she went on, an accent of disappointment in her voice. “ I suppose I am so changed. I know it is you.”

“ I do not recall your name,” he said, puzzled.

“ You never heard it, and I do not know yours. It is a long time ago. You helped us all one day when we lost our train in Spain. Do you not remember ? ”

The puzzling memory flashed into reality. He smiled.

“ I remember now,” he said, looking in vain in her face for the pink cheeks and azure eyes and childlike expression.

“ Are you staying here ? ” she asked eagerly.

"Yes. Are you?"

"No; I am staying a long way off. I only strolled into the cemetery to wait till the pony-cart was ready."

"I hope your sister is well, and the bright little children?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. They are big children now, and have brothers and a sister. What a lot of trouble they gave you that day!"

"It was no trouble," he said, marking the fact that there had been as yet no smile on her face.

She lingered. He looked at her, thinking "Can it be 'Apollo' she is in mourning for?" Then she said, lifting sad eyes to his face:

"You remember I told you I did not intend to have trouble? You told me it would be better to face it and be strong. It is very difficult to be strong, I find, when all the meaning is gone out of your life."

"For a time—only for a time," he replied earnestly. "Believe me, the meaning of life will return to you if you will have patience."

"I suppose so. Since you say it, it is most likely true," she answered with a sigh. "Oh, how glad I am to have met you again!"

"It is very kind of you," he said, feeling helpless under this sudden fervor.

"Kind!" she repeated, with a touch of the old eager ardor he remembered as her chief characteristic. "Kind of me! Why, you might as well say it is 'kind' of the thirsty earth to drink up the rain when it falls upon it."

"Have you so few friends that the words of a passing stranger should hold such value for you?" he asked gravely.

She looked thoughtfully at him; then moved out of the narrow pathway on to the grass again, so that he might pass on. She held out her hand, saying:

"I am keeping you; I beg your pardon. But you did not seem to me to be only a 'passing stranger.' Good-by."

And even while he took her hand, she turned aside from him toward the monument she had been looking at, and there was nothing left for him to do but to pursue his way. At the turn in the road which led round the side of the slope on which the cemetery stood he looked up. Her black figure, leaning against the high stone Calvary, stood out against the bright blue sky. She had one arm reaching round the stone, her head leaning against it ; her face was looking out sadly over the sea.

"Acquainted with grief," were the words which came into his mind. Then he thought to himself, "What a bungling ass I have made of myself ! I might have known she would not be likely to grow up into the kind of woman who would greet one in any stereotyped way. I wonder where she is staying ? How she is altered !"

As for her, she listlessly wandered about the cemetery, now looking at this name, now at that : "Kiliscabia," "Etchebaster," "Dargaignaratz," "Barnetche." She paused some time before the words :

GRACIEUSE DURONEA,

DÉCÉDÉE LE 21 AVRIL,

Âgée de 21 ans.

"'Gracieuse Duronea' ! What a pretty name ! I wonder if she was glad to die ; I should be. Uncle Dol would be rather sorry, of course, but then he has his own children."

Thus soliloquizing, she passed from one stone to another, hung with their black-beaded wreaths, and wondered that so sweet a spot could be made to look so ugly, and pondered on the strangeness of the names, and was glad that they were different in kind from any others she had ever seen. She thought she would like every experience now to be a new one. Then she sat down on the low wall.

"I am glad I have seen him again. Perhaps I may meet him somewhere and be able to explain myself better. It was foolish of me to suppose he would remember after all these

years, and much more foolish of me to suppose that he would understand. Jessie said people ought not to be always expecting to receive sympathy ; they ought to be content with being allowed to give it. I never met any girl so funny and so wise as Jessie."

Thus her thoughts went on from one thing to another till a quaint-looking little carriage, with an unmistakably English servant in it, driving a stout pony, rattled up the cobblestones to the cemetery gate.

She rose wearily, got in, and was rattled out on to the high-road, and so away up the hill.

The next day, Mr. Hay, having settled his invalid on the balcony in the sunshine with a book in his hand and an awning over his head, ordered his horse and rode away out of Bains and up to Los Granados to give Pedro some orders about his garden.

The air was sweet with the golden gorse which clothed the sides of the road ; the whitethorn was in luxuriant blossom ; the yellow fluffy edges of the blossoming willow near the ditches caught the sunlight ; magpies hopped hither and thither in a leisurely manner. Low carts, piled with wood and drawn by oxen yoked by the head, came slowly along, their blue-bloused drivers whistling behind them. Many of them knew Mr. Hay by sight and greeted him as they passed. He could have found his way in the dark to Los Granados, so familiar was the road, so endeared to him was every detail of the surrounding country. There was the long stretch of road, lined on either side by rows of poplars, straight as sentinels ; the turn in the road over the wooden bridge ; beneath it either the river flowing, or only a bed of ooze, with a sluggish stream in its midst, according to whether the tide was high or low ; the green meadows on either side ; the maize fields, now only filled with bare white stalks. As the road wound higher and higher there were the goats on the scattered rocks, and the silky-haired sheep with their slender black legs, feeding on the short grass. In woods on either

side the trees were overgrown with mistletoe, their trunks pillars of brilliant mosses. Through all this he rode till he reached the village, and so, passing the church and the *paume* court, he turned up the lane and pulled up before the iron gate of Los Granados. Pedro looked out from the woodshed. Seeing who it was he came toward the horse, the sweet, large smile of his race breaking over his face in welcome. Mr. Hay addressed him in his own language and enquired after Castora.

"Come in," answered Pedro, also in his own tongue, waving his hand royally toward the house as though it were his own; "come in. They are gone out."

Mr. Hay dismounted, and leaving his horse with Pedro strode round to the veranda, his whip under his arm, while he searched in his pockets for a parcel containing a present for Castora. His stern features relaxed into contentment as his eyes once more rested on his beautiful garden and dwelling. He strode straight from the veranda on to the floor of light inlaid wood of his *salon*, and there he stopped short, for, standing in the middle of the room, facing him, with her hat on, evidently about to go out, was the lady he had met the previous day.

For a moment they stood regarding one another. Then:

"*You!*" he said in astonishment. "Is it here you are staying? Who with?"

"With nobody. I have nobody, you know, except my dear and faithful servants," she replied.

"Who are you?" he demanded bluntly.

"I am Sarah Thornborough. I have rented this house for two months. A friend told me of it some time ago. I have been ill. As soon as I was well, I wrote to the agents and was fortunate enough to find it at liberty. It is the most beautiful spot I have ever been in. The owner is a Mr. Hay."

A smile broke over his face.

"How very strange!" he said thoughtfully.

"Will you not sit down?" she said, pointing to a seat and sitting down herself in his own especial chair. He sat down. "How did you know I was here?" was her next question.

"To tell you the truth I did not know you were here. The fact is, I am—that is to say—well, you see, the fact is, I am Mr. Hay."

"*You?*" she cried, leaning forward eagerly. "Is this *your* house?"

He nodded.

"Yes, Los Granados is mine."

For a moment neither of them spoke. They stared at each other. Both were thinking that they were glad. Then Miss Thornborough said regretfully :

"Castora tells me that it is only by an accident I got the house; that you intended to come here yourself and bring your sick friend. Of course I did not know *you* were her master, and I was not so sorry to keep out the owner as I ought to have been. But I do not like *you* to be kept out of your own place; I have no doubt I could find a house in Bains within the next few days."

"Would you rather be here or there?"

"Why, here, of course; there can be no comparison," she answered.

"Then I hope you will remain here as long as you like. You say you have been ill. Let us hope that the place will cure you as it has cured me."

"Have you been ill?" she asked in a puzzled voice, surveying his strong brown face and broad shoulders.

He laughed.

"Not lately, and then not with illness that a doctor's physic could cure," he answered.

Then he was instantly filled with disgust that he had said so much, and was relieved that all she replied was :

"I understand."

There came to the open window a woman also in mourning. She wore no cap, yet he received the impression that she was

a person in service, but also a confidential friend. She looked at him searchingly, critically; he felt that her shrewd eyes turned him inside out in that look. He was amused, and liked her all the better for the "on guard" expression of her voice and manner. She addressed herself to Miss Thornborough with motherly solicitude.

"I came to see where you were, my dear. Shall I tell George that you will drive, or would you rather take a walk?"

"I will go for a walk with you, Susan, thank you. Tell George I would rather drive this afternoon."

The woman honored Mr. Hay with another searching but perfectly respectful look and retired.

"Susan is my old nurse, now my maid and domineering adviser," observed Miss Thornborough with a wan smile. "George is her brother. I find him very useful out here. He was wild to come and see Bains, where Gideon had been—my cousin, you remember."

"A very handsome boy, who was one of your party that memorable day? I hope he is well," he said.

"He is dead, long ago," she replied drearily.

"I did not know. I am very sorry. I thought possibly——" He stopped awkwardly, glancing at her dress.

All her languid figure revived for a moment into vigor, as at some sudden remembrance. She leaned forward, looking intently at him, and said:

"Is it possible? Did you really think it was the loss of only dear Gideon that had struck all the life out of me like this, that had left me such a poor sort of creature?"

"I did not know. You forget I was unaware even of your name till five minutes ago," he reminded her.

"My name!" she repeated impatiently. "Does the chance fact of knowing a person's name make that person more your friend than to find out you have no end of things in common with a person whose name you don't know?"

"Pray forgive me. You took me too literally. Tell me

about your troubles, since you are good enough to consider me as a friend," he urged kindly.

But she had retired into herself. He had for the second time made her aware that the feeling of old friendship was all on her side. She sank back against the cushions of her chair listlessly and said nothing. He could see that she had not regained her normal strength after some heavy shock. Languor or moodiness was no natural part of her. She lifted her eyes to his presently, and said, without any touch of offence :

"As you did not know I was here you came very likely to speak to Castora? Do not let me keep you."

He was conscious of feeling disappointed. He supposed he must have said something to hurt her.

"Look here," he said, "we do not seem to be understanding each other quite so well as we did ten years ago. Let me say, once and for all, that I shall be glad to be of any service to you that I can. Do not imagine that you are boring me, if you feel inclined to talk to me."

"Thank you ; I should be glad to feel that. I have now a great many responsibilities and duties, and when I think over how best to fulfil them I am so puzzled. I have often thought, since it all fell upon me, that you would be the sort of man to help me, if I could see you. That is why I was so glad to meet you yesterday. It seemed an answer to what I had prayed for. And one so seldom seems to get an answer that I suppose I was unduly surprised and pleased."

There was a stateliness about her as she said all this, a regal manner of holding her chin in the air, and a repose about her hands and eyes which conveyed to him the impression that she was speaking from soul to soul, and by no means for effect. He looked at her gravely, nodded his head slightly, in token that he heard her, but he said nothing.

"You remind me of Jessie. She spoke so much with her eyes, too," she remarked.

"Do you know my sister Jessie?" he asked, surprised.

"Certainly. Oh, I forgot I had not told you. Our doctor sent for her to nurse me. I had never been ill before. I liked her. She was wise and strong, and when I was getting better I used to lie and watch her. She was such a lady. I beg your pardon," she added, seeing a smile breaking over his face; "I forgot she was your sister. But, don't you see that I never before had met a lady who worked for her living in that sort of way, and I had expected to find her only like our dear, good Susan, you know."

"I quite understand," he replied; "your feeling was most natural."

"We got to like each other extremely," she went on; "but she would not remain with me when I began to get better. She was sent for to a very severe case, and she went. She said I had had my full share of her attention," added Miss Thornborough, sadly smiling.

"That is very like Jessie. So, then, I suppose she advised you to come to Los Granados. Was that how you came?"

"She gave me the address of your agent, in case I ever decided to come. Jessie never mentioned her family, and I forgot to ask her. I merely knew Los Granados belonged to her brother. Trouble makes you so selfish, you see."

"Yes, that is true," he answered, wondering more and more at the odd chain of circumstances that had brought them all together, wondering also what the blow was which had necessitated his sister's service. For he was aware that Jessie liked best to be among only the most difficult or dangerous cases.

His eyes roved over the room, noting the additions of his present tenant. They fell upon a photograph on his writing-table. There was a bowl of fresh violets and primroses in front of it. Something about the face struck him as familiar.

"May I look at that?" he asked.

To his surprise she rose slowly, her eyes filling with tears. Mechanically he got up, too.

She turned aside, saying in a low voice : "Yes, I should like you to look at it, but it will not mean anything to you ;" and, while he stretched out his hand for it, she went quickly out of the room.

"Her father, no doubt, poor thing!" he said to himself. "Thornborough! Where have I heard the name? Where can I have seen this face?"

Suddenly a memory came back to him of the office. He saw the very French letter he had been writing; the very blots of dried ink on the desk; the particular long black ruler into which the lad, young Harding, had cut his initials for him. Then he remembered the fine face of his uncle's visitor, who had one day passed through with him, and how his own miserable heart had beaten in sudden sympathy with the cheerfully uttered words, "He that chiefly owes himself unto himself is the substantial man." Thornborough? Of course that had been the name of that singular man, who bore in his voice and in his carriage the culture and self-control of generations. That was the link, then. His old impression, as he and the girl had crossed the square together ten years ago, of her fineness and rarity came back, and with it the words, "Manners are not idle."

This man's daughter? No. For she had said she was an orphan. This must be the uncle, then. He could imagine how terrible the break might be in a life-companionship between two such beings. A sense of pleasure came over him, that he himself should be drawn, both by circumstances and by her own inclination, to be the successor of a man like this in the matter of "helping" her. He stood thinking. Was it for this that he had been denied that glittering piece of tinsel, Flora Moore, who had caught his boyish fancy and nearly wrecked his young manhood? Was it for this that he had struggled and studied? To become one with his natural equals, such people as these?

He looked into the eyes in the picture, the strong face of a man who had feared God and dealt justly by his enemy.

The whimsical twinkle lurking in the corners of the mouth reminded him of Miss Thornborough as he had first seen her. This was the face of one who could be a good hater and a good lover, but in nothing merely mediocre. And the girl who had loved and lived with such a man as this had chosen him to be her friend. Here, by chance, to his own house in the mountains, to the spot he had come to in his own dark hour, she had come in hers ; it should not be his fault if she was not soon able to say of it, as he had said, " I have come home."

He was not conscious of making a choice as he stood there; he only suddenly became certain that Miss Thornborough and he himself were born to be man and wife ; the face of the picture seemed to sanction it. Dead or living, no matter, they were friends by right of having the same standards, by right of thinking the same thoughts. That must have been her thought yesterday, when she claimed him as a friend ; how stupid he had been not to understand her ! He mechanically sat down in the chair by his writing-table, and, leaning his head on his hand, looked back into the day he had first seen her, went over her every look and tone ; then he passed her relations in review before him ; then turned once more to the picture of Mr. Thornborough, and looked for a long while at it. Then, curious to see all that belonged to her, he drew toward him a book that lay beside her writing-case. A slip of paper marked a page ; he opened it and read the underlined words :

" We are selfish men ;

O raise us up, return to us again ;

And give us *manners, virtue, freedom, power.*

" Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart ;

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,

Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free :

" So didst thou travel on life's common way

In cheerful godliness : and yet thy heart

The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

He turned to the fly-leaf. On it was written in a man's hand :

SARAH THORNBOROUGH,
From her old friend, Uncle Dan.

"I suppose she thinks those lines describe him," he thought.

He closed the book, and took up another. It was a very shabby one, covered in faded gray silk, drawn together inside by long stitches of black cotton, from the top to the bottom. It was "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," by Richard Baxter. Within was legible, in faded ink :

To our son Dan, on his fifth birthday.
From his attached parents, Gideon and Mary Thornborough.
1805.

Mr. Hay laid down the book. "Good Heavens!" he said to himself. "What a present for a baby of five! It was a stern up-bringing, and yet it resulted in such a face as this!" and he again looked at the photograph.

"Mary and Gideon! I suppose this is a regular Puritan family. Tenacious in their love for their own acres and for each other; worth winning, worth holding."

"M. Edouard!" said Castora's voice at the door.

He shook off his musings and got up. She advanced into the room, her kindly face one large smile as she polished a small brown hand on her blue linen apron for him to take. Her gray hair was bound up in a black silk handkerchief, and she wore a blue cotton skirt and jacket. She was beaming with delight at seeing him once more. They greeted each other in her own language, then relapsed into French, which she spoke with equal readiness and he with considerably more. Then he followed her out to the yard to see her chickens, and to give his advice about Brigitte going as *bonne* to Mme. Rose, a Frenchwoman by birth, the second wife of the English chaplain in Bains. Pedro was exchanging jokes and French words for English with Miss Thornborough's man, as

he washed down the carriage. Mr. Hay noticed a lady's saddle hanging up.

"Does Miss Thornborough ride?" he asked in English.

The man stopped in his work, and replied proudly:

"Anything, sir. She would manage a wild tiger if you set her to ride one. There isn't any animal she can't manage, and I ought to know, for I had the teaching of her, and of Master Gideon, too."

Mr. Hay saw that not to know the annals of the Thornborough family would be the one true form of ignorance in the eyes of this worthy servant.

"I brought that," pursued the man, nodding at the saddle.

"Miss Sarah thought she might find a horse here, but, bless you, sir, there's nothing fit for *her* to mount. I could not see her on one of them patchy-skinned mules."

Mr. Hay laughed.

"I will send up a decent animal for her in a day or two," he said.

"Do, sir. A good gallop is what she wants, and there's a niceish bit of road I've been up to with Pedro here, where I might take her safely. This little beast here can carry me. Will they let us over the border, sir? By what I can make out from Pedro, they do seem mighty particular about horses going to and fro in these parts, and not much to be mighty particular about neither. It's very poor cattle."

Mr. Hay explained their conversation to the eager and interested Pedro, who was already great friends with George, and was initiating him into the mysteries of the *jeu de paume* on Sundays, to the strong disapproval of his sister Susan Frant.

When Mr. Hay rode back again into Bains he was thoughtful, and all that evening he was but a silent companion to Felix Harding. After the young man had retired Mr. Hay went out again and paced the sandy little bay, and climbed the gorse-covered cliff against which the waves were gently washing in the moonlight, and strolled along under the

myriads of stars, through the grass and heather, till, reaching a stone cross set up long ago to mark some terrible shipwreck and loss of life at this spot, he sat down at its base and stared out over the quiet waters. Long he sat there thinking, and the subject he thought about was marriage, and the woman he thought about was Sarah Thornborough.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" came into his mind, and the answer was, "I was so glad to meet you yesterday. It seemed an answer to what I had prayed for."

When at last he got up to go home his final thought was, "I was in love with Love before ; now I am going to be in love with a woman. The question is, Will she ever be in love with me?"

After this Mr. Hay and Miss Thornborough saw a great deal of one another.

"Your friends in Bains will quite hate me," she said one day when she, wandering about in the wood of young oaks, saw him through the branches coming toward her from the house.

He laughed.

"So long as I do not incur your hatred for coming I can put up with theirs," he answered.

"I am glad, always glad whenever I see you," she said gravely.

He wished she did not find the truth quite so easy to say.

"Look at these asphodels," she went on, "and these violets and narcissus. Seven kinds of mosses I have been counting, and white and blue hepatica. Was there ever such a wood? Every day I come here and find something fresh."

"It is very beautiful," he answered, looking at the color which had begun to return to her pale face, and thinking how much stronger her voice seemed to be growing.

"Los Granados is healing me as you said it would. I am so grateful to it."

He stooped and picked primroses and white hepatica and held them out to her.

"Wear these," he said.

She took them silently and put them into her dress. Wandering on she gathered violets here and there till she had a small bunch; she bound them with a piece of grass and said shyly :

"Will you have them?"

And Mr. Hay felt, as he took the flowers from her hand, as if nobody had ever in his life before offered to give him anything. But all he said was :

"Thank you."

He had by this time heard all about Meads, and had gathered tolerably well the sort of life she had been leading, and all the responsibilities that lay before her. They never met without some allusion being made to the subject. To-day, when she did so, he answered cheerfully :

"Shall I tell you what I think about all this perpetual anxiety of yours about being able to fulfil your obligations?"

"Please do," she said.

"Well, I think you had better put Meads and your whole household right out of your head till you get into the train to return to it."

"I can't!" she replied.

"I should not think your family have been much in the habit of saying that, have they?"

She gave him an observant glance.

"You mean it is cowardly?"

"I do."

"I have faced many a difficult thing before, and have never been told *that*," she said.

"All the more reason why you should face this, then. Just now, the easiest thing to your state of mind is to worry, so you do worry instead of making a stand against it."

"There are all my servants and dependents and tenants. Must I not trouble about their welfare?"

"Certainly. But you tell me you have an excellent bailiff. You are here for only a few weeks, and your object in being

here is to get well. Give yourself up to your object. Accomplish it."

"I write to Jacob Frant and he writes to me twice a week. Do you consider that too often?"

"I do. Once a week would be sufficient, and once a fortnight would be better. Do you suppose I should ever get any real holiday if I did all my business from Bains? I might just as well remain in London."

"I should soon sink into apathy here," she replied drearily. "I feel as though I must keep on doing."

"That is the curse of to-day. When shall we learn that 'being' is worth at least quite as much as 'doing'?"

"That is a very modern theory, very easy to adopt as an excuse for being lazy," she objected doubtfully.

"Modern or not, the thought is pretty ancient. Will it help you to adopt it if I remind you of the words, 'He that believeth shall not make haste'?" he quoted gently.

They were silent a moment, then she said, as she had said once before :

"Since you say so, I believe it."

"I wish you were not so terribly submissive," he cried. "There is really no credit in opposing you."

She stopped and stared in his face.

"That is the first time in my life I have been called submissive. 'Dare-devil Sally' has always been my uncle's pet name for me. He hates a bread-and-butter miss."

"You don't look very dare-devilish at present, I must confess," he said, laughing at her puzzled face; "but then, neither do you look like a bread-and-butter miss; so take comfort. Now, I am going to take you to task on another point."

She made no reply, and he could see that she was not accustomed to be "taken to task," nevertheless he went on boldly :

"Why do you refuse every chance of being sociable with the good people of Bains? Mrs. Rose tells me you will not

even come in to tea quietly with her. You see if you stay up here and brood, you might just as well not have come to Los Granados at all."

"I am in no mood for visiting. It is not expected of people in mourning," she answered coldly.

"The heart does not necessarily mourn any the less because a person endeavors to show a friendly and cheerful exterior," he replied.

"I do not owe these people any such effort; it would be different if I were at home."

"I was not thinking so much of what you owe to them, but of what you owe to yourself. We are never at our best when we are allowing ourselves to give in."

"Even a wounded animal can creep away into a hole and be alone. Is there no such solace legitimate for us in our time of grief?" she asked defiantly.

"Seldom. It is a dangerous solace."

"You have a stern code. Yet you have known sorrow, and it has not hardened you or you would not be troubling about me."

"In your experiences I am living over again my own, and in seeking to help you I find that it has been worth while to have suffered."

"I see," she replied sadly; then added, "it has made you bold."

"Not too much so, I hope," he said wistfully. "Bold enough to intrude into the sanctuary of your sorrow in order to help you; not bold enough to wound you, surely."

She stood still, a tall black figure against a bush of white-thorn, the sunshine gleaming through budding branches upon the gold of her hair and upon asphodel and narcissus growing at her feet. She smoothed between her ungloved fingers a tuft of brilliant green moss; her eyes were fixed thoughtfully on it. Her lips were trembling. He did not disturb her, but scrambled down through stumps and dry leaves into the road a few yards below to speak to the driver of an ox cart whom

he knew. After a time she joined him there, and stood at his side listening to his halting sentences and to the driver's voluble ones.

"That *is* a strange tongue," she cried, when they were again alone. "I love to hear you speaking it. Uncle Dan always wanted to come here among the Basques. That is really what made me choose this part of the world to come to. Let us sit down here, and you tell me all about this people."

They seated themselves on the bank beside the road. All was still around them except for the sound of the cart wheels growing less in the distance, or the fall of a twig on to the dry leaves behind them.

"Where shall I begin?" he asked, as he pushed a large stone for her feet to rest upon.

"Well, have they no literature, no books that I could try and read?"

"No. If it were possible for us to master the language—which is impossible, unless we had been brought up in it—we should not find any books in it that would interest us. They have little poetry. I have read that their music is very descriptive. You could imagine while listening to it that you could hear them marching down upon their enemies through these echoing mountains."

"They are a very handsome race. Such beautiful hands and feet—don't you think so?—and such a smile, and such a fine way of holding themselves. Castora, for instance, might be a queen."

"Yes, they are all that," he replied. "Then note what a country they dwell in, full of shade and sunshine, of mountain and streamlet, of echo and dangerous footpath, and enticing sunny heights, bordered by a wild and generally dangerous sea. They are enterprising, strong, simple—a consequence of being a race of seamen and shepherds, and having all their dealings with nature instead of with man."

"I asked Pedro, when I first came, if he were French," she

said, "and I was quite struck with the grand air with which he shook his head and replied, '*Je suis Basque.*' I quite felt that to be *English* was in comparison a very small title of honor."

They both laughed.

"It is delightful to be among such a people," she went on. "Those medlar sticks, now, that they carry, I suppose in olden days they made pretty good use of the iron-spiked points?"

"No doubt," he answered. "'C'est son épée de gentil-homme,' says somebody, 'toujours prête à faire respecter son honneur, celui de sa fiancée, celui de son village.'"

"I think they are very handsome; the brasswork is so pretty, and the pattern on the wood. Pedro lent me his the other day when I was going for a climb. What is this 'chasse aux palombes,' I hear him speak of?"

"Ah, now you see that these people always must be hunting something. The Basque sailors have been the great whale-hunters, the inland men are all hunters by instinct, and you see their country naturally abounds in birds of passage, and when bad weather obliges them to make a halt in the mountains, then is the grand opportunity for the chase of the wild wood-pigeon. The particular chase to which Pedro was probably alluding is the most notable about here. Near that village they stretch nets from tree or rock, and the pigeons secreted in the gorges are driven forth by the sound of the huntsmen's rattles. Then, by artificial hawks, which they let fly at them, they become so terrified that they rush into the nets in flocks."

"I don't call that 'sport,'" cried Miss Thornborough scornfully.

"It is strangely exciting, though. I have seen it myself," he replied.

"I do not like to think of it. I should like to feel there was no cruelty in a people who at fifty can dance as Castora can."

"They are as little cruel as it is possible to be and still remain human," he answered. "Yes, it is a sight to see them dance. Boileau said, long ago, after coming here, 'La joie y commence avec la vie et n'y finit qu'avec la mort.'"

"How happy!" she said, dreamily watching a lizard that was darting in and out on the opposite bank in the sunshine.

"Do you notice how melodious and soft is the language? There are so many vowels in each word, and numbers both begin and end with a vowel."

"I see," she assented; "like *arratsa*, 'night,' for instance, or *uria*, 'city.' What a number of things you know! Just like Uncle Dañ. Nobody ever called him clever, and yet he knew something about everything you asked him. When we were first coming out here, I remember now so well, he actually had a number of extracts about this people and the Euscarra language copied out in his beloved old green manuscript book. How delighted I was that day in the train when you told me those peasants were speaking it. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

A silence fell upon them. She was idly plaiting long grasses together, he was tracing a pattern with his stick in the sandy road; their thoughts were busy with that day, and with all the years that had passed by since. Presently she said, musingly:

"There is a great difference between your life and mine. You have made yours, I have only lived the one that was made for me."

"As falls to the lot of many women," he replied.

"Not to Jessie; she has made her own also. I wish I had been poor once, as you were. It is difficult to understand other ways of living unless you have tried them. I suppose you lived in a very small house once, with quite a little garden?"

He thought of Byron Villa.

"We had a semi-detached house of six rooms, each about

twelve feet square ; we had sixty feet of back-yard ; there was no garden."

She fixed her eyes wonderingly on his face.

"Not so big as Jacob's home ; for he has a large loft, and a good big garden. Why, what a very extraordinary man you must be not to have gone mad in such a wretched little place ! Considering your tastes, I mean."

He laughed.

"People don't go mad so easily, and hundreds of men live as I lived. Looking back upon it, I am glad to have had the experience, though I thought it pretty rough on me at the time," he said.

"You would not like to go through it again, I suppose, would you ?"

"*Dios mio* ! no, indeed. Youth carries one over many a hard road, but in middle life—— God forbid that I should ever have again to make the experiment."

"I suppose it must be very terrible to be poor ?" she said, watching the expression of his face, as the recollections of the past swept over it. "I learned so much from Jessie. She has really seen life ; I have only seen a small phase of it. I begin to think there must be a whole army of girls—ladies, I mean, like me—who need my help, if I could only find them. Jessie must be the link between me and them, when I go back and take up my life again at Meads."

"Jessie is very practical," he said ; "she will never lead you into any weak philanthropy."

"Do you like the country ?" she asked abruptly, after a long pause.

He pointed to Los Granados, with a smile.

"Need you ask ?"

She laughed a happy, contented laugh. He seemed to see once more the girl, Sarah. From the old church tower the clock struck the hour of noon.

"Will you remain to lunch ? Castora will be overjoyed."

"And Miss Thornborough ?"

"Hopes you will do so if you can," she answered, smiling.

"I cannot to-day. But I am going to ask a favor of you."

"What is it?"

"I have a fancy for being with you once more in San Pascual. Will you allow me to drive you over some day?"

She met his earnest gaze with sudden sadness, and said wistfully:

"I should like to go. It is not nearly so far from here as from Bains, is it?"

"Not nearly," he said, rising. "It will take us about two hours to drive there, perhaps less."

She rose too. Standing facing him, she said half absently: "You are very tall. I never noticed it before. Are you sure you want to go yourself, and are not merely doing it to please me?"

"Quite sure. Now, another thing. I am giving a little dance to all my Bains friends in the hotel next week. Mrs. Rose is my hostess. You will not care to dance, but will you come and look in for an hour? There will be some dances you have not seen before."

The color mounted over her face. She raised her eyes to his reproachfully.

"I should not dream of coming. I wonder you should ask me, after all I said."

"And I wonder you should refuse, after all I have said. It would do you good," he urged. "You must make a beginning sometime, you know. Tell me, how many people have you spoken to since you came to Los Granados, excepting the servants and a chance peasant or two? Mr. and Mrs. Rose once, and I many times, have been your only visitors, probably."

"I am sure you mean it most kindly, but I must say I do resent this perpetual attempt to arrange my actions for me. Pray give it up," said Miss Thornborough suddenly, speaking in a voice of irritation.

He looked at her, amused, yet wholly sympathetic, entirely unruffled.

"Good-by. Your tormentor is going for to-day. Drop him a line to say what day you will do him the honor to drive with him into Spain. *Adios*." And, lifting his cap—the blue cap of the people—he strode away down the road to fetch his horse from the care of Pedro.

Miss Thornborough returned slowly through the wood again, and entered the garden. Susan Frant was looking for her.

"Dear heart, Miss Sarah, I shall have you ill again if you go so long without food. Come in, my dear; your lunch has been waiting this quarter of an hour." And she began affectionately to help her mistress off with her jacket.

"Susan, should you say Mr. Hay was a domineering man, or not?" asked Miss Thornborough, while she submitted to these attentions.

The faithful woman looked sharply at her.

"I should say he was one who persevered at what he had set his mind upon till he got it, but one who was careful not to tread on other folks' toes, for all his persevering."

"Should you say he was a man who would be satisfied when he had got it, Susan, or think less of it just because he had got his own way?"

"He's like most of us: values most what costs most, I expect. Still, if you want a true answer, I should say look at all this;" and Susan waved her hand over the house and garden. "He's made the place, and made Castora's life and her children's, and they do tell me he has made all his money himself, through his own hard work. No; I shouldn't say he was one of them see-saw kind o' minds, up one day with his head in the clouds, down the next with his head in the mire, till there's no passing an easy hour with him, let alone an easy life."

Miss Thornborough kissed her, for in these words she recognized the character of Susan's treacherous gardener.

"Susan, dear, should you say I had a bad temper, if anybody asked you? Come, try and be honest."

Susan Frant considered.

"You always say just what you think, my dear ; sometimes it hurts people's feelings. I should say you were a bit too proud at times, and lately, since you've been ill, you are a bit impatient ; but then you've had a deal to try you."

Miss Thornborough laughed sadly.

"Very nicely worded, Susan. Anybody can extricate from your remarks that you think there is room for improvement in me."

"My dear, I would not for the world let it out to anybody else ; but just to you, well, yes, I do think there is room for you to be a bit more patient with other folks' ways and words than you are now. But there, you would be perfect then, which it's against the Scriptures to expect of any of us."

CHAPTER III

DURING the next few days Miss Thornborough was so silent that her servants thought she must be going to be ill again. One evening she was standing at the window watching the stars coming out in the sky, still lit by the glow of the sunset. The days were lengthening considerably; the air was mild and balmy as midsummer. The great Judas tree in the garden shone crimson as a parting ray fell upon its flowers. The pleasant scent of burning wood filled the room. There was the tang-tang of cow-bells in the air; it mingled with the murmur of voices from the kitchen.

Miss Thornborough turned round suddenly from the window and rang the bell. Pretty Brigitte answered it. Her cheeks were glowing, a pink handkerchief was bound round her head, she wore her Sunday dress. She stood smiling in the doorway.

"Mademoiselle rang?"

"What have you been doing, Brigitte?"

"Ah, mademoiselle," she cried, blushing, "Pedro and I were but showing Suzanne how we dance the fandango; some of our friends have stepped in to see my mother. Mademoiselle is not angry?"

"Oh, dear, no," answered Miss Thornborough. "Why should I be? Does Susan like it?"

"Oh, yes. Suzanne finds it *triste* here sometimes. I like to amuse Suzanne. But mademoiselle rang?"

"Send Susan to me, and go on dancing, Brigitte, as long as you like," she said, laughing.

Susan Frant came in.

"I am going into Bains at once. Tell George to bring round the pony-cart as soon as he can get it ready. You come too, Susan."

"At this hour, my dear Miss Sarah?" expostulated Susan, amazed at the old briskness that suddenly seemed to have returned to her young mistress.

"Yes. Never mind the time. I am going to look in at a dance at the hotel for an hour; we shall be back by ten o'clock."

Susan Frant retired. She had heard, through George, who had been into Bains the day before, that Mr. Hay was giving a dance that night. It was the old impetuous manner come back again to her treasure, and she inwardly blessed Mr. Hay for having been able to rouse her.

Within half an hour the trio had started; they rattled along the road and over the wooden bridge, and jolted over the cobblestones into Bains.

The room at the hotel was very full, and around the doorways stood servants and friends of servants who had come to see the show. Susan and George Frant took up their station among them to wait till their mistress should be ready.

"Who is that girl in mourning, with the fair hair, who has just come in?" asked a pretty Scotchwoman of her French neighbor, whose black-eyed daughter was the life of the dance.

"*Mon Dieu!* how droll you English are! She has come alone. It is a countrywoman of yours. She has taken Los Granados, the house of our good M. Edouard in the mountains, you know. I do not know her name. See there, her man and her maid, who wait for her by the door. They say she is enormously rich."

"She moves like a queen," said the first speaker. "Ah, there is the new arrival of to-day gone over to speak to her. I suppose that is her attraction here to-night. Look, madame, —you know everyone—who is he?"

"It is the capitaine. Ah, what is his name? Janion. That is it. My husband told me. Look at our good M. Edouard; he is always so merry in the cotillion. See him now kneeling before my Marie. Ah, she has chosen him; they dance together. What a joy for a mother's eyes!"

Mr. Hay had seen Miss Thornborough come in, even while he took his place in the cotillion; he had seen, too, that the Englishman, who had only arrived at the hotel that day, had gone straight to her at once, as though they were old friends. Passing close to them in his waltz with the lively French girl, he caught Miss Thornborough's eye and smiled anxiously. Had she come to-night because of his request, or to see this new-comer, Captain Janion? As soon as the final mad whirl of the dance ended, he brought back his laughing, panting partner to her mother, then turned to Miss Thornborough, who was sitting near with the Englishman.

She broke off what she was saying, and looking eagerly up in his face, cried meaningly:

"I am here, you see. Are you satisfied?"

"Partly," he answered, taking her outstretched hand, and thinking, as he looked down on her fair, serious face, that if it should be a duel between the wits of himself and the man beside her, he was not going to resign her without some show of a fight. Why should not this one good thing become his, and not any other man's?

"You have a large gathering here to-night. Captain Janion expected to find an intelligent village, and here he is launched into the wildest dissipation of a city."

Then she introduced the two men. Mr. Hay found himself against his will taking a fancy to his enemy. A plain man, with an honest, cheerful face and an authoritative mien, some ten years his junior. They stood talking for some minutes. Many people had strolled away into the refreshment-room. Captain Janion turned to Miss Thornborough and held out his arm.

"Come," he said; "you must be hungry after an eight-mile drive."

Mr. Hay could not be sure whether or not there was a moment's hesitation before she took his arm, and said wistfully as they moved off together:

"Mr. Hay, have you forgotten San Pascual?"

"No," he answered irritably, "but I thought you had."

She turned her head over her shoulder and glanced back at him.

"I never forget," she said gravely.

He stood looking after her.

How meaningless, suddenly, was the whole roomful of people to him—this jingle of the band, this buzz of many voices and languages, the gay dresses of this laughter-loving people ! He had never before seen her in a crowd. It is so easy to be simple when you are out of doors, so infinitely difficult when you meet in a crowded room, he thought. He suddenly hated it all, and wished he had not asked her to come, and felt like a mountebank when, a few minutes after, he found himself at the refreshments, catering for bonbons for the black-eyed Marie.

Afterwards he saw her talking with Mme. Rose ; he went up and waited beside her.

They drew him into their conversation, then he said :

"It is ten o'clock. It is time you went back, unless you are remaining in Bains for the night."

"That is right, Mr. Hay ; somebody must take Miss Thornborough in hand. The air is cold at night still ; I have been telling her it was rash to come at all."

"I am ready to go now," said Miss Thornborough, bidding good-night to Mme. Rose.

Then he piloted her out through the crowd to the steps, where Susan Frant awaited her, and George and the pony-cart stood in the road.

She was graver even than usual and said nothing.

"You are glad to have met an old friend ?" he asked in a troubled voice as he wrapped her cloak round her.

"Yes ; he is a part of my old life, and his father has bought a place near to us," she replied.

"He does not seem to be fond of travelling," was Mr. Hay's next remark ; "he tells me he is not going on anywhere else."

"No," she said simply ; "he has come out here to see me."

"You were fortunate to hit off your meeting to-night," he said drily, knowing he was guilty of an impertinence and enjoying it.

But she did not seem to notice it. She went on musingly :

"I did not know he was coming out. He intended to come up to Los Granados to-morrow. I was as surprised as I was when I met you in the cemetery."

He believed her.

"Then you came to-night simply because I advised you to do so ?" he asked in a low voice.

"Certainly," she replied. "Will you drive me to San Pascual to-morrow *morning*? I particularly want to go."

He noted her anxiety, so different from her eagerness or her apathy. He wondered. Aloud he said:

"Will you be ready to start at half-past nine? The morning is the best."

She nodded. "Yes, yes ; I shall be quite ready."

Someone gently touched her arm.

"Oh, there you are. Good-night, Captain Janion. Don't come up to Los Granados till the afternoon to-morrow. I shall be out all the morning."

"All right," he answered. Then, going down to the pony-cart, he proceeded to arrange her rugs, saying, "Come, it is cold ; let me wrap you up."

She got in and submitted to his careful attentions. Susan sat down beside her. He wrapped a rug over her also, saying cheerily, "Take care of her, Susan. I bring you no end of messages from Jacob and from all your people. I will give you all the news of Meads to-morrow."

Miss Thornborough looked up at Mr. Hay as he stood on the top of the hotel steps watching them. The glare of lights and the sound of music streamed through the open door behind him. The light of the lamp shone full upon his face and upon hers. Their eyes met in a long, lingering look.

During their drive to San Pascual the next morning they

hardly spoke. Once again they stood together in the great dark church. There, in that corner, ten years ago, the baby had been christened ; here, by the porch, she and he and her sister's children had stood while he explained the stained-glass window to her. Here at last she spoke again eagerly, even as she had spoken then, and eagerly he listened, trying to be resigned to the blow he knew was coming. The scent of incense lingered in the building. A few women, absorbed in prayer, were kneeling on the stones in the nave. A lamp, burning on the great gilt altar, cast a light over the mantilla-draped Madonna.

They stood in the stillness and looked into each other's eyes. She impetuously held out her hands as if for help. He took them in his.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, I am so puzzled. Help me!" she cried.

"I will, always. Tell me everything."

"I wish he had not come out. I might surely have had these few weeks with you, after hoping so much that I should meet you again."

"You think he wants you to marry him? If you do not wish to do so, you can send him away," he said ; but he felt his voice tremble.

She drew her hands out of his and turned round to the altar, so that he could not see her face.

"I have been engaged to him all this time," she said in a low voice.

There was such a long silence that she found herself obliged to break it, and went on in a monotonous whisper :

"My uncles liked him. He has always been all that is honorable and good and manly. He proposed to me just before my Uncle Dan died. I refused him. I could never have left Uncle Dan. He said he should wait. Directly I got better he came again. I had lost all I cared for. I liked him better than anybody I had ever seen. I accepted him on condition nobody was to know till I liked. The

weeks went on, and at last I had to come out here. He has been very patient. I have only written once to him. Now he has come out to ask me to let it be made known, and to give him leave to go at once and tell my uncle, Sir Godolphin Leigh."

"Well, and do you not wish him to do so?" was all Mr. Hay could trust himself to say.

She made no reply.

He went to her and put his hand on her arm.

"Do you love him?" he asked, looking searchingly into her face.

"I do not know," she said in a low voice.

"Then I cannot help you," he sadly cried. "No one can ever help a person who does not know what they want themselves."

"I do know what I want," she murmured.

"Then be honest. Speak out. Why do you not say right out to him whatever it is you want to say? I am sure of one thing, that no decent man would want you to marry him while you were uncertain whether you cared about him or not," he declared with vehemence.

"I suppose not," she replied with dignity. "This is strange conversation for a church. Suppose we go."

He followed her out into the porch; then with a sudden impulse she said:

"Leave me here a little while. I should like to be alone. Perhaps if I pray, my duty may become clearer."

She turned back again into the dark church, and he idly wandered up the street to wait for her.

"What does she mean? Last night as I stood on the steps I could have sworn she cared about me. To-day there is no more feeling in her face than in that staring Madonna. How can I say anything to her if she means to marry that fellow? It is a poor trick to have played him, to have brought her away from him to-day. Why didn't I know?"

Thus reflecting he strode impatiently about, his hands

thrust deep into his pockets, getting more annoyed every minute at her position and his. After some time he came again to the church porch, and stood there waiting. After all, he thought, it was perfectly natural that she should already be engaged to be married. And yet—and yet, if she were satisfied, why did she so constantly remind him of a pent-up volcano? What lay beneath that dignified and calm, though sad, exterior? She was not in love with Captain Janion. He did not believe it. He would find out during the drive back, even if she resented it forever afterward. "My God!" he groaned, "I can't give her up, I *won't* give her up." He pushed open the leather-covered door, and re-entered the church. He advanced up it; his eyes, growing accustomed to the darkness, peered into every corner. He could not see her anywhere. She must have gone outside to look for him. He retraced his steps. Perhaps she had gone to the inn where he had put up the pony-cart. He went there; it was time to be starting home again. She was nowhere to be seen. It was like her independent spirit to be taking a tour through San Pascual on her own account; still, he wished he had any idea where she was going to meet him. After wandering about for an hour he went to a restaurant and had some lunch, and then began to be seriously uneasy. He wondered whether she had gone to the railway station and taken the train back. Then he reflected that there was no train till the late afternoon one. He went back to the inn, and to the church, and finally to the station. Here he sat down to wait for the train to start; but she did not appear. In great anxiety he went out again and crossed the square where, years before, they had stood together under the stars. The afternoon was drawing to a close. He came into a garden with a fountain in its midst and benches along its walks. There, calmly sitting on a bench near the fountain, was Miss Thornborough. She smiled sadly, and made room for him. He hurried up to her.

"Here I am, in the garden we sat in before. Do you re-

member? You have been looking for me. Never mind. Come, sit down. The hours have passed quickly. I knew we must drive by this garden gate to go back. I should have seen you pass."

"Are you aware that I have been searching for you for hours, and that Captain Janion is probably now waiting at Los Granados for you?" he cried reproachfully.

"I am not going to think of anything except that you and I are sitting here alone together," she said. And, looking at her face, he thought he read in it the struggle of this afternoon that she had chosen to spend alone. He saw that she had decided for self-sacrifice. "It will be so soon over, and we may never be together again," she added.

He struck the stones impatiently with his stick.

"And how do you propose to yourself to bear all the years of a union with a man whom I do not believe you care a straw for?" he demanded.

She looked startled. "I shall have strength. It is always given to those who are doing their duty."

"Is it your duty to tell a lie to an honest man?" he asked roughly.

"It is our duty not to break a promise."

"It is our duty not to make it carelessly," he asserted stubbornly.

"The sacrifice of self is not an unworthy one," she said in a trembling voice.

"Possibly, if you can ever manage to sacrifice only yourself. Generally one or two other people get immolated also. To my mind it is a sorry sight, and savors of vainglory and the pleasing of self."

"You would sweep away all the stern virtues, and give me nothing in their place."

"Not so; I do but ask you to act honorably toward your fellow-man. The truth is always best in the long run. You would demand it for yourself. Why, then, offer anything less to another?" he implored.

"What is the truth in this matter? Do you know?" she asked, looking suddenly in his face.

"Yes, I know; and so do you. Only you are so full of the foolish pride of never making a mistake," he cried in an agonized voice.

"Let us go," she said after a few minutes, getting up from the bench. "I am tired; I cannot fight any more. You tempt me by your words, but I must not let them bewilder me. I must stick to my promise."

"You shall not!" he said, following her. "If I never see your face again after to-day—which God forbid—I will not leave you alone till I have shown you the iniquity of what you propose to do."

They walked on rapidly toward the inn, both of them in so great an agitation that they could scarcely collect themselves enough to pay the reckoning and mount and drive off. The promise of a hot summer was in the air; the mountains lay purple against the sky. The rays of the setting sun sought out the color in everything around them; the slender trunks of the dark pines gleamed golden, the maize-stubble gleamed pale yellow. The blouses of boys driving cream-colored oxen shone brilliant blue; the stems of the willows in the shallows shone red with rising sap. It was a brilliant evening, full of renewed life and warmth and color. Overhead a flock of wild geese, in a long straggling line, flew slowly in the red sky, returning northward from Africa.

They drove through it all in silence, came to the frontier, halted, crossed it, and began to wind up the broad, lonely road to the table-land across which for some time their way would lie. The color was dying out; now the mountains looked no longer purple, but lay black against the clear green sky. Not a living thing was in sight. Mr. Hay let the reins hang idly, and turned to her once more.

Her face was set into lines of determination. She looked capable of making a great mistake, and of splendidly living it out. There was not a trace of weakness about her. He

felt that the prospect of gaining happiness herself would be the one thing that would not have the slightest weight with her. He began to feel very desperate ; every nerve in him seemed braced up to overrule her decision.

"Should a man ask a woman to marry him when she has told him that she is engaged to another man ?" he said in a low voice.

She continued to stare at the mountains, but she did not answer. He went on :

"A man would say nothing if he thought she was happy. It would be his duty and his pride to swallow it all in silence. But, if she is not going to be happy, is she right in allowing him, too, to be sacrificed ?"

"Ungenerous to talk to me alone up here, where I cannot escape from you," she burst out.

"Let me be ungenerous, so that I save you from doing a great wrong. I tell you that marriage without love is a sin. You know it as well as I do. You shall not do it !"

"Oh, Uncle Dan ! Uncle Dan ! what shall I do ? I wish you were here," she cried in bitterness.

"He would advise you, as I am advising, to be true to your heart, rather than to any shibboleth, however excellent," he insisted with gentle sternness.

"Just think of that poor man coming by my own appointment, trusting me utterly ! There he arrives this afternoon to find the girl who is engaged to him gone out for the day with another man."

"It has an ugly look, I confess," he said ; "but people have broken their engagements before now, you know."

"*People* may have done so ; our family keep their word. I suppose you would not have driven me here to-day if you had known about him, would you ?" she added miserably.

"No ; certainly not."

"Then I have put you into a false position, too ? I see I have," she bewailed.

He said nothing.

"He will be there when we get back. He is sure to wait. He will be anxious and think something has happened to me."

"Tell him everything," he cried.

She turned round upon him impetuously.

"It is easy for you to urge me to give him up. He will be the loser, you the gainer."

Their eyes met. She saw all that her words admitted. Even in the gathering darkness he saw the color mount up all over her face.

"Oh, what have I said?" she gasped. "I ought not to have said that."

"Yes, you ought," he replied eagerly, "if it is true. Only you do me wrong in thinking I am urging you from any motive except the one of saving you from making a mistake. The rest you and I can settle afterward. You have taken the words that are waiting to be said to you out of my mouth. They are still unsaid by me, and will continue to be unsaid unless——"

"Unless what?" she asked breathlessly.

"Unless I find some day that you are free," he cried.

"They would have no weight with you now."

"No; none," she replied in a hardly audible whisper.

He thrust the reins into her hands and jumped down.

"Hold those," he said in an altered voice. "How long do you suppose I shall be capable of sitting up there at your side and acting only as your father-confessor? I am going to lead the horse; it is getting dark."

"Light the lamps," she cried.

"I have no matches," he answered.

They proceeded for some distance in silence. There had been almost no twilight; the golden sunset had faded suddenly into darkness. Orion came out. A thousand stars began to twinkle above, and from all around came the sweet smell of dewy earth. They had come down from the tableland; they began slowly to mount the hill. The long line

of poplars stretched out in front of them up and down the hills ; they looked a high black wall in the darkness.

"If only he drank or gambled it would be so much easier to send him away ; there would be a reason," sighed Miss Thornborough from her seat.

Mr. Hay, in the road, guiding the horse in the darkness, made no answer.

"How can you advise me to break my engagement, when it is just what you resented that girl doing to you years ago ?" she demanded passionately. For he had once told her all about Flora Moore.

"I have lived to be glad that she did so. She did me a less injury than marrying me would have been," came back his answer from the road.

Miss Thornborough balanced herself carefully, then jumped down and came to his side.

"I'm not going to sit up there any longer by myself," she said.

They walked silently all the way up the hill, each only conscious of the presence of the other. There was not a sound to be heard except the plodding steps of the horse. Darkness and stillness, black shadows and shapes, surrounded them. She heard a sigh, a mere breath in the still air. "Oh, *esposa mia* ! Ah, sweetest eyes were ever seen !" he murmured to himself.

"I wish I had not been brought up to do my duty," she gasped under her breath ; "then I could send him away, and you and I—— But I am mad and foolish to say this while you walk stolidly on and never say a word."

Then Edward Hay abruptly stopped the horse, and still holding the bridle with one hand, he laid the other heavily upon her arm and said in a voice that trembled :

"Oh, Sarah Thornborough, if I spoke the words that my heart is bursting to speak, you would not be able to call me stolid. How thankful I should be if I could now get away from you till you have made up your mind which of us it is

you love ! But as I have to be with you for the next half hour, I entreat you to spare me. Climb up again and leave me to walk here by myself, and do not break the silence, which you make the only thing possible between us two, so long as you have not sent him away, if indeed you intend to do so. Get up again, I beg of you, but do not torture me by walking and talking at my side."

And his heavy grasp half held her and half pushed her from him. She seized his arm and held it fast in both hers, trying to see his face in the darkness, and cried :

"You care for me like that ? Then now I may tell you that that is how I care about you ! Every minute I am not with you seems to me a wasted one, and to see your face and hear you talk gives me strength and makes me feel I do not ever want to be with anyone else."

"And with such thoughts as these about me, you can still contemplate marrying another man !" he cried hoarsely.

"I must," she gasped. "I come of a family who would die sooner than break their faith with another. I dare not."

"You would prefer to commit murder," he said heavily. "You will kill the best in three lives—his, mine, and your own. But I have said all I could. Time alone can show you the right thing to do. Go, go ; you can have no notion of what you are making me suffer ;" and shaking off her hand, he led the horse on again.

"We are told to work out our salvation in fear and trembling," she said brokenly as she continued to follow him.

"True, true ; but you are making it, 'What man hath joined together God Himself shall not put asunder.' Leave me. I feel your sweet eyes through the darkness. I see your imploring face. I am only a man. Do not try me any longer. In mercy let me be." Then with a cry of relief he added, "We are at the top of the hill. We will both get up again. There are the village lights ; we are nearly home."

"Nearly home !" she repeated impatiently. "Nearly

home! That does not make it any better. *He* will be there."

Bolt upright and miserable she sat beside him. He spoke no more.

Out came Captain Janion to the gate of Los Granados, followed by the anxious Susan Frant and Castora.

"Thank goodness! Here you are at last. You are awfully late, but I hope you have had a jolly day. I was just thinking I must be getting back to Bains."

Miss Thornborough let him help her down.

"Good-night, Mr. Hay," she said, holding out a shaking hand.

He did not take it. She saw in the lamplight that his face looked gray and altered.

"Good-night. No, thank you, I will not come in," he said absently.

He turned to Pedro, and, ordering him to bring his horse down to the inn for him, he strode away. Captain Janion and Sarah Thornborough entered the house together.

After a long interview Captain Janion went back to Bains, and from thence the next day to England. With agonizing regrets for the pain she caused him, Sarah Thornborough had given him up.

The next afternoon she went wandering alone up the hillside. When she came down Castora was standing crying in the gateway.

"Ah, mademoiselle, there you are at last! My M. Edouard has been here. He has just gone. He has had bad news. He returns to England at once. He asked for you, and then wrote a letter for you."

Sarah turned white, hurried in, and opened the letter. He wrote :

"My uncle has had a stroke. A fearful fiasco in our firm, caused by our new partner, has taken place. I am probably ruined. I return to England at once. You are as free as

though yesterday had never been. I have nothing, and am nothing. Your decision will now be easier. If there should ever be anything in which I can help you, ask me."

"Susan!" cried Miss Thornborough sharply, up the stairs. Susan Frant came running down.

"Our time is nearly up here. I shall not remain till the end. Pack up, please. We shall go home to Meads on Friday."

Toward evening she heard the church bell ringing for service. A mission was being held by the curé of another village. He had a great reputation. Castora went to hear him every night. Miss Thornborough put on her hat, and, in the gathering darkness, went down through the village and entered the church.

This evening the service was for the dead, and no light was in the place except that from a vast pyramid in the centre of the nave, hung with black, and blazing with hundreds of candles, each sent in token of some dear departed. The church was thronged. The body of it was packed close with women; the three oaken galleries equally packed with the men. Away from the blazing pyramid all was in gloom. Sarah Thornborough found an unoccupied chair, and, squeezing it close to the wall, she sat down. Everybody was in black.

"They pray for their dead," she thought. "I will pray to be like mine," and she fell on her knees.

Long she knelt there, thinking of Dan and Rachel Thornborough, of Gideon Leigh, and of all her old life at Meads. All the indecision and anguish of the day before began to disappear, all her pride in her unbroken rectitude, her fear of making a mistake, and certainty that her own way was the best. She murmured to herself:

"'A contrite heart,' Aunt Rachel said. What a pity I cannot tell her that I understand—at last! I have been wrong in resenting Uncle Dan's death. I have given my

word and broken it ; I have made a mistake and confessed it, and been forgiven. I love; I have suffered; I feel more like other people. I have been full of the pride of well-doing. The former things have passed away."

They began to sing, that great concourse of fervent fisher-folk and husbandmen and shepherds, to their magnificent organ. Sarah bowed her head and listened, soothed.

" Battus par l'orage,
Nous crions vers vous ;
Nous pardons courage,
Ah ! secourez-nous."

Part VI

THE FOOLISHNESS OF SARAH

"Thou hast then the victory ; use it with virtue. Thy virtue wan me ; with virtue preserve me. Dost thou love me ? Keep me then still worthy to be loved."

CHAPTER I

"SALLY," said Sir Godolphin Leigh to his niece one day at Meads, soon after her return home ; "Sally, you must get a new bailiff."

They were walking up and down the lawn together, and he stopped now and then to poke at a chance dandelion root left behind by the careful gardeners. His niece stopped beside him, holding her parasol over her shoulder with one hand and smelling at a bunch of striped picotees which she held in the other. They had been up to see Jacob Frant, and the picotees were the spoils from his garden. Sir Godolphin Leigh was beginning to stoop, and his walk, owing to his gout, lacked some of its old briskness. But he was keener than ever about all that concerned Sarah and the welfare of Meads, as he now regarded himself as her sole protector and adviser. He fidgeted at a tough, refractory root, and finally tossed it into the air to some distance, with a grunt of satisfaction, then resumed his walk and remarked once more :

"Yes, it is pretty clear to me that we must look out for somebody at once. Ben's lad has good stuff in him, but he is too young to take the management yet. Poor Jacob, bless my soul, he's as deaf as a post, and as bent as a willow wand."

"He was very ill, I suppose, while I was away, wasn't he, Uncle Dol ?"

"I believe you, Sally. He held up till you were well

abroad, but poor Dan's death has taken all the spirit out of him. Eh? What? He isn't good for much now, but to potter about in the sunshine, and maybe keep an eye on the poultry. The question is, who can you have?"

"Ah, that is just the point," said his niece calmly.

"You see, Sally, what you need is a husband, and what Meads wants is a master."

"That is just what I think too, Uncle Dol."

"It must be lonely for you here, my dear, all the long evenings, and the days when nobody happens to call. When are the Meakin lot coming to you?"

"Not till August. Mabel said they could all come if she waited till the children's holidays, and Percy will take his holiday then also. He is going to Scotland, but will join us here for the last part of his time. I shall like to have the whole batch together for once." Then she added to herself, "It may be all different by next year."

"Bless me, child, to think of the Thornboroughs having dwindled down to just you! For, of course, I don't count that flimsy Meakin breed."

"You can't do away with the fact that Mabel is my sister," said Sarah, laughing.

"Look at those," returned Sir Godolphin, pointing with his stick to a plume of tall lilies and a bed of candytuft beside it; "they're both of 'em flowers, and both of 'em white. Naught else alike about 'em. One's you and one's Mabel. Don't let me catch you wanting to marry a little, neat chap like Percy. My notions have had to change during the last twenty years, and I could wish you could have fancied Janion, my dear. Dan and I thought very well of him."

"So did I. He is a chivalrous gentleman, only I did not happen to love him," she said sadly.

"Bless me, Sally, what more did you want? You admired and respected him. You won't be falling in love now, like a maid of sixteen. You are no chicken now, remember."

"I know," said Sarah quietly.

"Don't, child! Don't answer me like that. I cannot bear to see you tame, with your claws pared and your wings clipped. Eh?"

Sarah laughed gently, and tucked her hand through his arm.

"Come up and sit on the terrace with me, and I will tell you a secret. Only you must not scold me."

He looked pleased. He knew that his brother-in-law had always had every confidence of Sarah's, and often he wished he could in some measure fill his place to her.

"I won't scold, my maid," he said, as they seated themselves. "Tell away. I have not got Dan's gift of wisdom, but what little I have, God bless me, I hope I can scrape together and give you the benefit of."

A pause followed, in which Sarah was pondering how to begin. At last she said quietly, with a smile playing round her mouth and dancing in her eyes :

"The fact is, Uncle Dol, dear, that I have chosen a new bailiff, and also a husband."

"Eh? What?" he cried, thinking she was joking.

"I have. The only thing is that I have not offered him the situation yet, and I don't know whether he will take it."

"Him! There are two men, aren't there?"

"No; only one. The only man who shall ever help me manage Meads is the only man I shall ever marry."

Her uncle chuckled.

"Eh? Dare-devil Sally once more! I like to hear her. Go on, child. Who is he, and what is he?"

Sarah's gaze travelled thoughtfully across the lawn toward the blossoming chestnuts in the field. She was rereading the words in Mr. Hay's letter: "I am nothing, and I have nothing." How could she explain to Uncle Dol? Uncle Dan would have understood in a moment.

She turned to the affectionate and impatient old man at her side, and told him all the bare facts of Mr. Hay's life, ending by saying :

"And so, you see, he is an admirable man of business, and

well fitted to help me. He has no land of his own to be pining after, so he won't mind living here."

Sir Godolphin Leigh was nearly choking with surprise and disappointment.

"*Mind*, indeed! *Mind* living at Meads! I should like to see the man who would *mind*. God bless my soul, Sally, you've been taken in, just as I told poor Dan you would be. Taken in by a fortune-hunter."

Sarah's face flamed.

"He is not!" she cried hotly. "That is just it. It is much more difficult to accept a favor than to bestow one. He will think Meads a great barrier. I do not believe he will marry me, not if I went down on my knees to him."

"Then he's a booby if he wouldn't," returned her uncle inconsistently, secretly admiring her fair, angry face. "A precious booby, I'll go bail. Made love to you while he had a few paltry hundreds of his own, and then throws you over in a fit of sentimental anger because he loses them. Eh? What? Let the fellow go, Sally. It's sheer foolishness to throw good thoughts after bad. 'Tis a misfortune you ever met him."

"No; it was the most fortunate moment in my life," she cried. "Now, look here, Uncle Dol, you make any enquiries you like about him. His uncle knew Uncle Dan, and you can go up to Lawson's and ask all about him from a business point of view. And as for the rest, I know he visits at several houses Aunt Mary goes to in town."

"Pooh! what's the visiting got to do with it? People will invite any ass covered with gold nowadays, while your horse with a pack-saddle may go hang. No; I'll have a word or two with Lawson, and your aunt shall write to her brother in Devonshire and enquire about those Moores. You say his sister married Moore, the present vicar there? Bless my soul, Sally, what a heap of trouble you give! *Mind*, I'll do it just to satisfy myself, but I hope you will have the good sense to leave the fellow alone."

Sarah smiled happily. Her uncle saw it.

"Why, child, eh, you don't mean to tell me that you are *in love* with the fellow?" he cried testily.

"Yes, I am, out and out, over head and ears! Why, Uncle Dol, did you ever know me talk so much about any man before? And didn't I begin by saying I was going to tell you a secret? And you must not tell, you know, because he may refuse to marry me, which would be awkward for me, if it got about the neighborhood, you see."

There was a mischievous twinkle in their eyes as they looked at each other. Sir Godolphin Leigh chuckled.

"Brother to that bit of a thing who nursed you! It is a queer set-out altogether. Well, your aunt thought her an uncommonly knowing body. We live in most surprising days. Monstrous queer! If anybody had told me that the heiress of Meads would have spliced herself to the brother of her sick-nurse, I'd not have believed it."

"Put it the other way, and say that Mr. Hay-Thornborough's sister had the grit to make a career for herself, rather than be a burden to him," cried Sarah with spirit.

"Hay-Thornborough!" repeated Sir Godolphin musingly. "It don't sound so bad, Sally. What's his name, child?"

"Edward," she replied softly.

"And a good, plain, common-sense name, too. Well, well, we shall see. 'Tis a risky game to be playing. Remember, Sally, I tell you 'tis sheer foolishness to try it."

"I shall remember. I shall never hold you responsible, if my wishes come to nothing. But that won't happen, Uncle Dol, dear. You will see."

He patted her shoulder kindly.

"Good maid! You have kept a corner for your old uncle, in spite of giving all your heart to this good-looking adventurer. He *is* good-looking, I suppose. They always are. Eh? What?"

"I don't know," she replied, laughing. "I never thought about it. He is very grave, generally, and has kind brown eyes, and his hair is getting rather gray."

"Eh?" grunted Sir Godolphin. "Gray and grave and penniless! A monstrous deal to recommend him, I must say. There, there, Sally, have your fling, but you'll live to be disappointed in him."

"Never, you bad old man!" she cried, kissing him. "I see the Howards' carriage coming up the avenue. Come in and help me to entertain them. You have been very good to listen so long. Here, let me put this picotee in your buttonhole."

When her visitors had left, and Sir Godolphin Leigh had driven home to his dinner, Sarah Thornborough began to wander through the old silent house, seeing each familiar room afresh with the eyes of Mr. Hay. Now that she thought of him as her companion, her wanderings over her domain were no longer restless and miserably lonely; her mind was no longer full of a passion of remorse for the multitude of attentions she meant to have paid to those departed, full of rebellion against the fate that had left her here last of her name.

She looked at the portraits in the dining-room, and was glad that they were her ancestors. She recognized now that she herself was the image of her grandfather, that stern Gideon Thornborough of whom her Uncle Dan had always spoken with respect, but never with affection. She thought what a pity it was that his brother, the fair boy in brown suit with brass buttons and broad frilled collar, had not lived to man's estate, and that, of his two cropped-headed sisters in the straight white frocks and red leather shoes, one had married a colonial bishop, and her children had remained abroad, the other had died unmarried. Sarah began to think that it would have been rather nice to have had a few more living relatives. All this great roomful of people had been born, had lived, and most of them had died at Meads. She looked at the picture of herself and Gideon, when they were children, taken standing hand in hand, with the ivy-colored house as their background. She knew she was supposed to be holding bird's-eggs in her pinafore, while Gideon's other

hand grasped the ladder leaning against the house. Old Jacob had once told her the story of their childish escapade.

She went into the drawing-room, and thought that Mr. Hay, who had collected such curious and beautiful things himself, would certainly be interested in its high-backed chairs, with ears of wheat painted on the black ground of the backs ; in the candlesticks and boxes of Battersea enamel, the figures of Chelsea and Bow ; the cabinets of sandal-wood and of tortoise-shell ; the harp ; the old spinnet, and the tables of amboyna and satin-wood.

When she reached the library she stood looking at the book-cases. Here was the old calf-bound Milton, out of which she and Gideon had learned their "Lycidas," with its "Critique by Mr. Addison," its lines on "Paradise Lost," by Mr. Andrew Marvel, and its woodcut of Satan who, in sandals, short clothes, and shield awkwardly displacing his wings, stood in a cave haranguing other persons in armor and wings, amid flames and black rocks. Sarah could hear once more her uncle's voice reciting Mr. Marvel's words :

" Where could'st thou words of such a compass find ?
Whence furnish such a vast expanse of mind ?
Just Heav'n thee, like Tiresias, to requite,
Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight."

Here was "Conference of Monsieur Le Brun, Chief Painter to the French King, 1701." How familiar to her was each drawing of the "Mixed Passions"! How fond Gideon had been of imitating "Laughter"! whereas "Rage" had been her favorite. Here was the "Virgil," with its license from George II. to "Our well-beloved Joseph Davidson, of Our City of London, Bookseller," for the sole printing and publishing of the works of Horace and Virgil, "and all the other Latin Authors," "for the term of Fourteen Years," "given at Our Court at St. James's, 1741-2." Here was "Fables of the late Mr. Gay," with its dedication "To his Highness William Duke of Cumberland." She knew the look of every

woodcut. How Jacob used to laugh at the lines when she repeated to him "The Owl and the Farmer"!

"The farmer laugh'd, and thus reply'd,
'Thou dull important lump of pride!'"

Then her eye fell upon the fine little red morocco "Ras-selas"; the venerable "Breeches" Bible, where was to be read, since the days of Queen Elizabeth, "and they sewed figge leaues together, and made themselves breeches." While bound at the end was, "The whole Booke of Psalmes, by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, and others, . . . with apt Notes to sing them withall. . . 'If anie be afflicted, let him praie; if anie be merie, let him sing Psalmes.'"

How carefully Aunt Rachel had instructed her out of "The Book of Trades," with the quaint pictures and terse, accurate information about "The Iron Founder," "The Glass Blower," "The Chemist," and many others! Amid the shoal of modern literature for children, on which Mabel's infants were regaled, was there anything more instructive, bracing, or entrancing than "The History of Theophilus and Sophia," "The Infant's Progress," "A Drive in the Coach through the Streets of London," and "The Naturalist's Pocket Magazine"? "And yet," she remembered, as she slowly ascended the stone staircase, "and yet Mabel and Percy said they should sell up the whole of Meads if it had been left to them, and furnish a new house in town. They say they prefer having no articles of any sort that have 'musty traditions' attached to them. Whereas I always feel as though I were living in the showroom of a shop when I stay with them. I suppose I look to them as antiquated a survival of bygone days as my belongings, fit only to be kept on a shelf as a curiosity."

Upstairs in the blue room all was covered in white sheets, under Susan Frant's careful reign, yet here could be seen the colored print of "Adelaide, North Terrace." This was a vast tract of trees and mountains, with a cleared space in the fore-

ground, showing neat rows of some hundred wooden houses, a tiny church on the open grass plot, and a wooden cart, drawn by bullocks, standing by the river's grassy banks. A great-uncle had sent this print to Meads to show them that comparatively unexplored country, Australia. Here were the silver snuffers and tray, and here hung the bright copper warming-pan, with the peacocks engraved on the lid, kept here instead of below-stairs ever since some autocratic decision of her grandmother, Mary Thornborough.

Lastly, she wandered into the old state bed-chamber, and sat down beside the mahogany four-post bed, and fell into a reverie. How many Thornboroughs had brought their brides home here ! How many babies had been born here ! How many heads of the house had ended their days here and passed peacefully away ! The windows looked toward the sun-rising and toward the south ; they stood open now, and the peacock was sitting in the yew-tree, which spread its branches almost up to the east window. The south window had a broad window-seat painted a deep cream color ; on it, in the corner, lay the little pile of devotional books which every Thornborough had made use of as they succeeded to that room.

Then Sarah again perused the familiar verses that, printed in clear black letters and framed in black wood, had for generations hung side by side over the high mantel-piece.

“ That our sonnes may be as the plants
Whome growing youth doth reare,
Our daughters as carved corner-stones
Like to a pallace faire.
Our garners full and plenty may
With sundrie sorts be found,
Our sheepe bring thousands in our streetes,
Ten thousand may abound.”

“ Man walketh like a shade, and doth
In vaine himselfe annoy
In getting goods, and cannot tell
Who shall the same enjoy.

Now, Lord, sith things this wise do frame,
What helpe doe I desire ?
Of truth my helpe doth hang on Thee,
I nothing else require."

Sarah smoothed the bed reverently with her hand, and leaned her cheek against the post and thought of Dan Thornborough. Here had he come alone uncomplainingly, and laid himself down to meet his future. What had he thought of as he lay down? Had he called her to come to him? Had he good-bys to say, or orders to give, or a final conjecture to make about what lay before him? No one would ever know now what had occupied his thoughts on that last evening. He had lived his life honorably and cheerfully, and taught her to do the same, and had then gone unto his own place, an old man, and full of years—his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

"This was his room. Here he may have sat and mourned over the loss of his promised wife; here prayed many a prayer for the guidance of Gideon and me; here passed many an hour of struggle and worry and loneliness, and yet he was always the same downstairs among us all. This room is indeed sacred," she thought. "Who am I bringing here to rule after him, after them—to rule in such different days? For there is a greater difference between my day and Uncle Dan's than between his day and that of my great-great-grandfather, I should think. It all rests with me. I choose not a husband only, but a ruler over many people and interests, a dispenser of a large sum of money, a father to the Thornboroughs yet to come. There is no one to consult with. Is it possible for me to choose unwisely? *He* told me to follow my own heart. After all it is the heart that Uncle Dan trained and made; it *cannot* go wrong. Oh, Edward Hay, it turns to you; it tells me that you were born to come after him. All the voices of my house rise up out of the Past round me to-night and say, 'Choose him. He is suitable and worthy to follow us.'"

Then, mingling with the voices out of the Past, was another voice, murmuring, under a warm, starlit sky, "Ah, sweetest eyes were ever seen ! Oh, *esposa mia* !" "He has lost everything that he worked so hard for. I will give him all that I have. He will value Meads as I value it." She spread her arms out over the bed, and, slipping on to her knees, laid her face down on the coverlet. She prayed.

During the weeks that followed Miss Thornborough's time was fully occupied with correspondence of all sorts, with accounts, leases, charities, with interviewing lawyers and tenants, with going the round of the farms in her new capacity as "landlord," in returning many a call of sympathy and kindness. One morning, among the number of letters and circulars in her post-bag, she drew out one from Jessie Hay. She propped it up against the silver urn in front of her, and proceeded to read it in the leisure of her lonely breakfast. Part of it ran :

"And so at last my dream has come to pass—of becoming a trained parish nurse for the poor ! I have formally written to accept the offer of the committee, of which I see you are one, and the one who (I read between the lines) has started the idea in your town and nominated me for the post. You, who have been able to live all your life like a limpet on its own rock, can form but a small idea of all that you have put me in the way of getting. The rolling stone will roll no longer ; the drifting boat now will cast anchor for good and all. Once more I shall have a home, and home in the most comfortable sense for a poor and unmarried woman. I shall be tethered in a community of children, and find my work ready made, within walking distance all around me. — What clever spirit possessed you to assign me rooms in the Thornborough Orphanage, and so save me from my nightmare of perpetual lodgings, with the perennial mutton chop and boiled egg ? I saw my brother for an hour when I passed through London. Thank you for your note of kind sympathy about the smash-

up of his business. Perhaps you saw in the papers that the rascal who had caused all the mischief has shot himself. My uncle has just died. I do not apologize for troubling you with my affairs, for it is a relief to me to talk to one so sympathetic as yourself. My brother told me his agent had been fortunate enough to sell Los Granados. I am afraid I should have stuck to it; but he considered he owed all he had to the creditors. I think he feels the loss of that place more than the ruin of his business. My sisters have told me it was a very charming place. I wish now that I had seen it. . . ”

Miss Thornborough finished the letter and went on with her breakfast, thinking. Then she withdrew to the library and her writing-table, carrying with her the mass of correspondence, which, from the shape of the envelopes, promised to be merely of a business nature. She looked over them rapidly, tossing circulars, notices, advertisements, into the wastepaper basket, laying aside in a pile the important letters to be answered presently. Nearly at the bottom of the collection was a long blue envelope. “At last! Well, I *am* glad!” she cried, tearing it open. She looked over the contents lovingly; a smile, which suddenly illumined mere vigor and purity of outline into a warm beauty, spread over her face, and lingered there for a moment or two, as she sat staring on the enclosure, and through it away at something infinitely satisfactory which it seemed to show her. Then she got up, letting all the rest of the papers fall from her lap on to the floor, and with a huge sigh of content said aloud, “Now I shall do it.” Then swiftly she went away down the long passage to the workroom.

Miss Thornborough’s habits were methodical; the kitchen was always the first place she visited after breakfast, and Susan turned round from the cutting out of work for her mistress’ various charities, saying in an astonished voice:

“My dear, you here already? Is anything the matter in your letters, or is it only the newspapers?”

"Unfeeling woman ! I believe an empire in ruins, or a theatre full of people burned to death, would matter less to you than if I had a finger ache." The good woman smiled. "No, Susan, there is nothing the matter, only I have been reading that the missing heir to a kingdom is found, and his coronation will take place shortly."

"Oh ! One of them foreign quarrelsome places, I suppose, my dear. Most of them foreigners are ready enough to be made kings. It isn't often a king gets mislaid, as you may say ; they're mostly only too handy, and a deal of ill-will goes on between them, as I've heard Uncle Jacob say."

"Well, this man never caused ill-will in his life. He is going to marry the queen, and they will live happy ever after, as the fairy-tale kings and queens do."

"How you do run on, my dear !" said Susan Frant.

Her mistress had gone behind her, and was sitting upon the low sill of the open window, so she could not see the smile that again covered her face.

"I am going up to stay with Mrs. Meakin the day after to-morrow, Susan. I shall be away two nights. Please pack our things to-day, and leave Kate plenty of this sewing to do while we are gone."

"There's nothing the matter with the children, is there ?" demanded Susan anxiously.

Miss Thornborough laughed joyously.

"Can't you think of something nice happening for a change ? You are always on the look-out now for some trouble."

Susan Frant's scissors went nip-snap methodically, while she cut the full length of her stuff through. Then she proceeded carefully to pin widths together. Miss Thornborough spoke again :

"Susan, Jacob's gift of prophecy has not descended upon you. Do you ever flatter yourself it has ?"

"What do you mean now, I should like to know, my dear ?"

"Years ago you told me that a man would be more likely to love me than I to love him. Well, you are wrong."

Susan Frant turned round sharply, and fell back into the remonstrating tones of her young days.

"Who is he, Miss Sarah?"

"I did not say he was anybody," said Miss Thornborough ungrammatically. "I merely informed you that I had discovered myself capable of having a shred of affection for those unhappy beings who have not had the luck to be born Thornboroughs or Leighs or Frants. There, there, I must be off to the kitchen. I like talking riddles to you, because you never guess the answers till I tell you you may."

Susan Frant looked after her up the long passage, then returned to her work, nodding her head, a shrewd look on her face.

"It's him; I do believe it's him. I don't take to stranger folks, but then, as Uncle Jacob said, when I told him what I suspected, 'The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you . . . ye shall not vex him.' My lamb! There, he's one of our sort, I do think, though he don't come from these parts. And that Nurse Jessie, too! Yes, I do think she will make her a good sister. But no man, not the best of 'em, could come near what Gideon would have been by now, if it had pleased the Lord to spare him. Well, they do say we choose different at thirty to what we do at twenty. And if Mr. Hay is graver than I could wish, why, so is Sarah, and maybe they'll cheer each other up."

A few days after this, Mr. Hay was walking restlessly up and down the sitting-room of his London lodgings, late on the hot summer afternoon. Outside, in the parched square, it was fairly quiet, but through the open windows came the roar of the traffic from the adjacent main thoroughfare. The fashionable world had left town, and even the semi-fashionable had been for the past week on the move. The air was thick and sultry, as well as hot. The trees in the square were distinctly turning brown. Everything in the room looked dusty and faded; the table was covered with papers tossed in confusion; the torn horse-hair chairs were piled

with books. Mr. Hay had sold all his furniture in the first-floor rooms, which for years he had occupied, and had moved upstairs into his landlady's furnished apartments, in spite of her protests that they were not nearly good enough for him. He looked white and fagged, "utterly played out," as Felix Harding had told him that morning. "Lawsons" had taken the clever young clerk into their service. "I shall only stay with them till you want me again, mind," he declared hopefully to his late chief.

It was not the affairs of his firm that now occupied the thoughts of Mr. Hay in his restless walk. He drew a letter from his pocket, reread it, and thrust it nervously back again. The letter consisted only of the words, "Please be at your rooms at half-past five to-morrow. I am coming to see you." There was no address, so he was unable to put off the writer. He knew the clear handwriting. What was it all going to mean?

"How like her to come to me! She was afraid, even if she asked me, that I would not go to her," he thought with a sigh. "How could I? What right have I? And this room is not fit for her to come into. It is as bad as Byron Villa again."

He heard a knock at the house door. He turned cold. He had never known what it was to feel ill, but he suddenly was conscious what a strain the past months had been upon him. He stood with hungry eyes fixed upon the door that would so soon open and show her to him once more.

His landlady ushered her into the room, bestowing an interested look upon them both as she shut the door. Miss Thornborough came toward him with outstretched hands. Her fair hair was in a curly knot behind, and curly rings came out on her forehead from beneath her hat. She wore a black dress, but it was trimmed with something that gave him the impression of her sparkling all over, from the glad light in her shining eyes down to the hem of her robe. She held in her hand a long blue envelope.

"How good of you to be at home!" she cried. "And how nice it is to see you again!"

He took her hands in his that trembled, and murmured something ; he knew not what.

"Let us sit down," she went on, marking in an instant how tired he looked.

They sat down beside the untidy table.

"First, I want to say how sorry I was to hear about all your troubles. Secondly, I want to know what you are going to do ?"

He searched on the table and handed her a letter.

"I have received that offer from a house in New York. It will keep me in bread and cheese," he said.

She looked through it.

"A good offer, is it not ?" she asked.

"Yes, as times go, very good."

"Have you accepted it ?"

"I am going to do so to-night," he answered wearily. Then he roused himself. "But do let me thank you for obtaining that post for my sister Jessie. You have made her immeasurably happy."

"I am so glad. I wanted her near me, you know. I told you at Los Granados that Jessie and I were friends."

"I remember," he said. "Poor old Los Granados ! I have sold it, you know."

"Yes, I heard so. I love every foot of it."

"Did you ?" he asked sadly. "Then I am the more sorry it had to go. But the purchaser must be intelligent, for I hear he has taken it just as it stood—furniture, and my small collection, and the garden stuff, and all."

"You had put so much thought into it, had you not ?" she said gently ; but there began to be a tremor in her voice.

He clasped his hands together and leaned forward, his arms resting on his knees, saying, as though he had forgotten her presence and it were a relief to think aloud: "It was the dream of my boyhood to have a little place of my own. I came, a tolerably wretched sort of fellow, to that spot among the very race of people I had wanted to know. I found

Castora. It made me happy to think there was somebody I could help. There was the house, in, as you have seen, a situation enticing beyond words. I bought it ; I filled it, year by year, with every beautiful thing I could pick up, and, as time went on, I looked around my house and garden, thinking that some day, when I should meet her, I should give it all, as my wedding gift, to the woman whom I loved. Many people have come out there with me and found rest and health, and regained their beliefs in the good of living. Los Granados has readjusted many a mind out of balance, out of touch with its human kind. I got more and more fond of it. Sometimes I used to think of you, bright and honest and full of laughter, as I first saw you, and used to say to myself that no doubt you were married long ago, but that I should like my wife to be like you. Then you came. Then I found that it had been your uncle who, years before, had casually spoken the words which had renewed self-respect in me when, in that particular week, I had been ready to curse God and die. You seemed to me to be the woman I had been waiting for, and I made up my mind to win you if I could. You are bound up in my thoughts, with my mountains, my garden, my home. You, unconsciously, cared the most for the very things I did. You used often to pick up my pet purchase and say, as reverently as I did, 'How beautiful !' You have often stood in my garden, on my chosen spot, and been silent, as many a time I have been, at the immensity of the beauty of the country spread out before you. It was yours, all yours. It was the one thing I had to give which was worth your acceptance, you who already owned so much and could purchase anything you liked. But you could not purchase Los Granados, for there was not another. It was made out of my heart, it was adorned with my fancy, it became glorified by your coming to it."

He paused, drew his hand over his brow, as though to obliterate all past recollections ; then he spoke again in a dull and ordinary voice, out of which all the passion had died. "But

that is all over now. It belongs to strangers. Castora must find a new situation, and Brigitte must go without the dowry I promised. Pray forgive my indulging in this retrospect. The sight of you carried me away. My dreams have faded into the light of common day. I am beginning the world again, and luckily there is plenty of work left in me yet," he added, leaning back at last and looking at her.

"What an odd man you are!" she said in a low voice, earnestly meeting his gaze, into which he had suddenly thrown nothing but coldness and conventionality.

"Why so?" he asked, amused, in spite of his sadness, at her abruptness.

"Let me try and plead with you as you once pleaded with me. To begin with. Should a man tell a woman she is the dream of his life and that he loves her beyond measure—should he tell her all this unless he intends to ask her to marry him?"

He started.

"Forgive me!" he cried. "I was thinking aloud, as a man does perhaps once in a lifetime, and then only to a woman——"

"Who loves him," she put in softly.

"Hush!" he said. "You are so generous, so impulsive; but I must not take advantage of you. Why did you seek me out here? You have unmanned me. I had no business to speak as I did just now to you."

"Why not, pray?" she demanded.

"Cannot you see that I have nothing to offer you left in the world? That a ruined, broken-down man cannot ask anyone, least of all a wealthy woman, to be his wife? I am no fortune-hunter."

"Just what I said to my uncle."

"How do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"He told me I should be taken in by a mere fortune-hunter, and I told him you were not," she said calmly.

He got up and began his restless walk again.

"Of course. That is how it would look to anyone less generous than yourself," he said irritably.

"You should follow the leading of your own heart instead of any shibboleth, however excellent," she cried, looking yearningly yet mischievously at him.

He stopped a moment in his walk and smiled sadly.

"I remember telling you that," he said. "I wonder you stood so much hectoring from me."

"You were quite right. I was then in a false position, and you exhorted me to struggle out of it. I took your advice. Why will you not take mine?"

He made no reply, but continued his restless walk. Miss Thornborough, leaning back in her chair, watched him anxiously.

"I am very solitary," she said presently. "If I did not know that we loved each other I should just accept my loneliness as my lot and live on at Meads, doing my best, and perhaps some day I should find someone whom I could feel I could marry. But as it is now I bear but impatiently the solitude, knowing that it is forever impossible that I should care for anybody but you, knowing that you have the same feeling, and yet that you will not come to me. So, of course, I am worse off than if I had never seen you."

He stopped near her, leaning his elbow on the mantelshelf and looking down on her eager face. He was twisting the chain of his watch nervously; his forehead was contracted into a frown.

"Is that so?" he said in a low voice.

"Have you conjured up for me an army of relations?" she asked, smiling up at him. "Cannot you yet comprehend all that it means when I say, 'I am lonely'? A great wide house in the middle of fields and farms, with just only me tucked away in the corner of it. Even my friends cannot run in and out as people are able to do in London—distances are too great. It is not lonely for the servants, of course; there are so many of their own position in and about the place. I

suppose a man does not picture things that he does not see, so easily as a woman does. Now, Jessie seemed to understand directly. I suppose men see with their eyes only, and girls see with their minds as well. Why do you look so amused?"

"Because I am thinking what dense, blundering creatures we must often appear to you."

"I have not known intimately a great many men," she replied thoughtfully; "from among them Fred Leigh is the only one who has seemed to me to be really blundering. And just at present *you* seem to me to be dense. But, then, I think you are purposely so," she added.

"It is better that I should be," he said in a low voice, turning very pale, and frowning more than ever.

Miss Thornborough got up from her chair.

"Then I suppose I am to understand that it is time I left," she said, with even more stateliness about her than he had ever before noticed.

"Yes; I suppose it must be all or nothing; a parting to-day forever, or——" He paused.

They stood opposite to one another. His face was worn and agonized, his eyes looked yearningly into hers.

"Or—what?" she asked gently.

He made a movement toward her, drew back again, then motioned her toward the door.

"Go, please," he managed to say.

"It is a struggle between love and pride," she said, and all her sweet voice was full of caressing affection. "I am a woman, so of course I forgot to be proud, or I should never have come here to-day. You are a man, so of course your pride is more to you. But if you cannot forget it, you will make me feel I have made a mistake in coming to you, and then perhaps I shall also learn what wounded pride means."

"My dear, my dear," he murmured, "you do not know what will be said. I am years older than you. I must not let you do it."

"Ah, what is the use of admiring the power of love in

poems, if we are not capable of it ourselves?" she cried. "There is no one who can help me so well as you could. I should feel almost as if I had Uncle Dan back again, if you were with me at Meads. It is so silent there now. It is so difficult to look upon a house as *home*, when it is only peopled by memories. You think so, too, I know. And you know you will be miserable—will you not?—when you find yourself in New York, all alone, and look back and think how happy we might have been together."

He shuddered. A long pause followed, during which he remained with his elbow leaning on the mantel-piece and his face covered with his hand.

"Do you suppose I have not had my dreams, too, about you?" she said at last in a low voice. Then slowly she took up the blue letter she had brought with her, and suddenly was seized with shyness, as she held it out to him, saying, "I meant to give you this when we should have settled things between us, but, as it seems so difficult to make you understand, perhaps you had better look at it now."

Then she hurriedly turned away to the window, with her back to him.

He dropped wearily into a chair, and drew out a lawyer's letter. It was wrapped in a sheet of notepaper, across which he read, in her writing, "Sarah's marriage gift to Edward." Then he read the letter. It was she who had bought Los Granados. This was her gift to him.

Long did Sarah Thornborough stand at that window, while silence reigned in the room behind her. The slow moments passed. Was he convinced, or annoyed, or tenderly pleased, but obdurate as ever? But if he were at last comprehending how she loved him, then let this moment of ecstasy last and last. The Thornborough habit of decorous waiting upon the feelings of other people was strong upon her. She remained motionless, her hands hanging clasped before her, her dancing blue eyes full of tears, her mouth quivering with hope, with laughter, with uncertainty. What would Mabel say if

she ever came to know of her visit here? And Uncle Dol? Well, nobody should ever know. But there was the bell of the gloomy church close by striking the hour. She must hasten back, or she would be late for dinner, a great crime in the Meakin household. Well, let the time go. What did anything in the whole universe matter to-night, so long as that one harassed, struggling man would consent to let her make him happy?

The rays of the setting sun began to slant over the treetops in the square straight in her face. She moved slightly to avoid them. Then at last came a sound from the other side of the room :

"Sarah!"

She turned round, her fair face alight with eagerness. He was sitting where she had left him. His hand hung over the arm of the chair; the letter had dropped from his fingers on to the floor. He was leaning forward, with all his heart in his eyes, which were fixed upon her. He looked as though he had been sitting just so for a long time.

Neither he nor Sarah moved. Each was arrested by what they read in the face of the other. There was stillness and silence while their two souls found each other at last. After a time he got up, and slowly she drew nearer to him. He held out his hands. She placed hers within them. Then they kissed each other long and thankfully, and with a sense of immeasurable comfort, as do tried and long-parted friends.

Then Sarah suddenly sat down, trembling but smiling.

"Ah, what should I have done if you had sent me away?" she whispered. She spoke, trying to make talk, in order to give him time to recover from his emotion. "I am tired after such a long battle, and I have quite forgotten such a very important thing."

He bent anxiously over her. He had not yet found his voice.

"I must tell you, then I must go directly. You must allow me to return as I came, alone."

"Do as you will," he said, "now and always."

She looked lovingly at him.

"I do not suppose we shall quarrel over that sort of question," she said. "But, oh, I do hope you will not mind. I meant to have told you first, so that you should not feel I had let you in for anything."

"Go on," he whispered as she paused. "There is no one in the least like you. I can't realize it all in the least. You must continue to take the lead in this mystery of joy, till I find my own bearings a bit."

"You will have to take my name," she said, smiling up in his face.

He laughed softly.

"Is that all?" he said.

All words seemed meaningless between them. They went out together in silence. He put her into a conveyance, and stood watching it drive away till people jostled him on the crowded foot-way, and he began to move along with the stream of passers-by, seeing not the crowded and dusty streets, but purple mountains and the flaming Judas tree in his garden at Los Granados. He murmured to himself:

"It is all still mine. Sarah, oh, royal heart, well is she named Sarah!"

Sir Godolphin Leigh was very satisfied when in the following week, after his niece made known to him her engagement, Mr. Hay paid his first visit to Leigh Court.

One evening the whole party were sitting in the drawing-room after dinner. The man Sir Godolphin's elder daughter was engaged to was also staying in the house, and there were people to dinner. Sarah was going through her *fête* in a dutiful, martyr-like spirit, but she was longing for the day when she could show Edward Hay her own home. But her aunt had taken possession of them both.

"My dear Sarah," she cried, "I like him! I never expected to, but I do. So does Mabel. I have had such a nice letter from her, saying she quite well remembers what a help he

was to Percy years ago, when you met him. She says she took quite a fancy to him even then."

"*That's a banger!*" declared Sarah.

"Sarah!" exclaimed the astonished Lady Leigh. "*What an expression!*"

Her niece laughed.

"I have just learned it from Robin. It is a lovely expression and was so applicable. Mabel never gave a thought to Edward at all, except to wish I would not talk to him. She treated him like a doormat, and not a new one, either."

"Well, well. Mabel was but a girl then," said her aunt soothingly.

"Even if you *are* a girl you need not treat people in that sort of way, just because you don't know their pedigree back to Adam," declared Sarah hotly. "It makes me sick to remember it."

"Never mind now, dear. I have no doubt he did not notice Mabel's manner; he was so taken up with you. I have never seen such a lover. I think, really, I never imagined a man quite like him. He has strong, silent ways of his own. He is quite unlike what I had pictured him. It is a very poor match, though—everyone says so—and, if your uncle had not talked me into it, I should have thought it my duty to try and dissuade you, much though I like him."

"You would not have succeeded, Aunt Mary."

"No, I suppose not. Captain Janion, now; the idea of that was bad enough—no family, but a good profession; whereas Mr. Hay——"

"Has nothing, and is nothing," put in Sarah gravely.

"Exactly so, dear. A most unfortunate choice. There is one good thing, and that is that he is not at all weak. He will be master."

"So was Uncle Dan," returned her niece dryly.

"I was not referring to Meads; I was referring to you. You need someone to rule you. It is always more comfortable for a woman."

Sarah's eyes dilated. She made a sound which was suspiciously like a contemptuous whistle. Lady Leigh did not observe it, but continued placidly:

"I should not be surprised if it turned out really quite well, Sarah, dear, and there can be no doubt as to his being a thorough gentleman."

"It *is* odd, isn't it, Aunt Mary, that, considering my bringing up, I should have happened to choose one?" said Sarah. And there was wicked laughter in her eyes.

Edward Hay, standing in one of the bay windows, saw Sarah's frequent glances at him, saw the impatient tap of her foot, and the scornful movement of her proud head while she talked with her aunt, and when the lady with whom he was conversing moved away, he saw Sarah instantly notice it. Leaving her aunt, she hurried impetuously across the room and came to him.

"Edward, Edward, smooth me. Aunt Mary has been ruffling me up, all the wrong way."

They stood half-hidden by the curtains in the deep window. He put his arm round her.

"What is it, dear?" he asked.

"She says you will want to rule me," she cried anxiously, laughingly looking into his eyes.

He frowned.

"Ah, love, love, that is the rock people enjoy running your gay bark upon to your ruin. 'Tis as difficult for a man to prove to a woman that he does not care about ruling her, as it is to a step-mother to prove that she wants to do her duty fairly. The world has settled those questions for us, and we are damned beforehand."

"I should not want you to be ruled by me, either," she said gently; "a feminine bully would be no better than a masculine one."

"Drop the expression; it is not a fitting one between you and me," he implored.

"But," she pursued, "it is true that you have a strong will."

"You would not prefer me to have a weak will, would you?" he asked, smiling.

"I should *hate* it!" she declared emphatically. "We can co-operate, as Uncle Dan and I always did, can't we?"

"Certainly. You must forgive my smiling. But you do look so very anxious."

"I *am* anxious. Our marriage must be perfect," she cried, looking earnestly in his face. "I have never been accustomed to anything second-rate."

"I can well believe that," he replied. "You had that air about you the very first time I saw you. I am of your opinion also. Do not be anxious; we are both aiming at the same ideal."

"I never used to think about *getting on* with Uncle Dan. Answer me. Tell me why," she insisted.

He breathed a sigh.

"How can I answer you? How can I speak, or be conscious of anything, while you are holding my hand so close in yours, and looking into my face with those sweet eyes?" he murmured.

Sarah raised to her lips the hand she held, and covered it with passionate kisses, while the red crept all over her face and throat, and he bent and put his lips against her bright hair, which waved between the strings of pearls that bound it.

"I shall take no notice of what anybody says," she cried. "I shall love you and trust you forever. It is the only way I know how to do, and if you do the same, it *must* turn out perfect. Don't you think so?"

"What shall I say?" he answered. "I never felt before how painful it is to be born a man of few words. Have patience with me and you shall not find me wanting. Yes; yours is the only way."

Sarah suddenly looked shyly at him.

"Do you remember that evening I jumped down and walked beside you and the horse?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, smiling. "I am not likely to forget it. You made it pretty hard for me."

"Well, do you know, I do not mind telling you now that I

thought you were very cold and stern. I never should have thought you could be such a splendid lover. And I like you all the better now for the way you behaved then."

"There was no other way," he said simply. "You are beginning to understand how difficult it was, now you are in love yourself."

"Yes ; there is so much that goes on all around us to which we are forever blind, unless we have been at some time or another in love," she said thoughtfully ; "then we can begin to read reasons and motives and actions with astonishing clearness, if we choose, I think. I am very sorry for old bachelors."

He laughed gently.

"Why more so than for maiden ladies ?" he asked.

"Oh, they are *much* worse off than we," she declared. "A woman has her imagination to help her out, but a man has not even that compensation ; he goes blundering along, getting more and more self-satisfied, because he has no imagination to keep reminding him of all that he might have been. Whereas, a woman's imagination constantly reminds her, and prevents her getting too self-satisfied."

Edward Hay looked amused.

"I am continually discovering some new conclusion of yours. But I should have imagined that your uncle had glorified to you all old bachelors."

"Ah, yes ; if they could all be like *him*. The memory of Uncle Dan is like

" ' A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'rdarkened ways
Made for our searching.' "

People like him

" ' Haunt us till they become a clearing light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.' "

Sarah's sweet voice lingered lovingly over the last words :

"They always must be with us, or we die."

"That is how I love. That is how the people I have loved will always seem to me ; they never die."

Edward Hay, in answer, continued the lines for her :

" O sovereign power of love ! O grief ! O balm !
All records, saving thine, come cool and calm,
And shadowy, through the mist of passèd years !
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent ; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honeydew from buried days."

"Ah," she said softly with pleased surprise, "you know it too ! Such a favorite poem of Uncle Dan's ; one of your many tastes in common with his. You are so like him."

"Then I am the less unfit to live with you," he answered, kissing the white brow that leaned against his shoulder.

Sarah sighed out of pure satisfaction.

"I am happy, Edward. Oh, I am happy."

Later on in the evening Sir Godolphin Leigh came and sat down beside Sarah in a distant corner where she and Edward Hay were talking and laughing together.

"Now then, my maid," he cried, chuckling, "tell me how it all came about. Bless me, it would never surprise me to hear that you popped the question yourself ! Eh ?"

Sir Godolphin delighted Edward Hay. He laughed. Sarah slid her arm through his, and his fingers clasped her hand. The movement did not escape her uncle. He burst out into his most contented and hearty laugh.

"God bless my soul, Dare-devil Sally to the very last ! Hay, if you ever try to turn my maid into an everyday sort of wife, I'll never forgive you. Come, Sally, confess to your old uncle. Was it a royal proposal ?"

"Was it ?" she asked, smiling in Edward Hay's face mischievously.

He was looking at her uncle.

"We did it between us. Sarah was generous enough to say for me what I could not say for myself. Yes, in every sense it was a most royal proposal," he said, and he lifted the hand he held in his to his lips.

Sir Godolphin regarded him for a moment curiously.

"And a right down sensible arrangement it is," he cried heartily. "Look here, Hay, you and I had our talk yesterday, but I should like to add this to-day, though you won't know all it means unless Sally can explain it to you ; I believe if my good brother-in-law Dan were here to-night he would be satisfied with you for Sally's husband. Now then, child," as Sarah patted his arm approvingly, "try and tell Edward what that means. Eh ? Dan was right. You will marry no booby. God bless my soul, I begin to think even my lad could not have been better ! Eh ? What ?" he added as he moved away.

They remained in their corner, but there was no need for any explanation between them about Dan Thornborough.

There was a great gathering of relations at Meads at the marriage of Sarah Thornborough. Moores and Kings, Meakins and Howards and Leighs came. Lady Leigh established herself at Meads for the wedding week to receive them all, and Sir Godolphin gave his niece away.

"God bless my soul, child, the place is crammed !" he contrived to whisper when they reached the church.

"It is a regular triumphal procession," she whispered back ; "just what I meant it to be. Isn't it fun, Uncle Dol ?"

But Sir Godolphin felt that the occasion invited more gravity.

"Eh ? What ? Sally ! Sally, you should think how serious a step you are going to take."

"If I had not done all that before, it would not be much good doing it now. How can I feel serious when I see the desire of my eyes standing up there waiting for me ? Come along, Uncle Dol ; everybody is ready."

So Sarah moved on at the head of her triumphal procession, and Edward Hay, awaiting her, answered from afar her smile of welcome. Only twice during the service was Sarah's reverent demeanor upset. Once at the words "with all my worldly goods I thee endow," and once at the words "cherish and to *obey*," when she raised eyes brimming with laughter to his face.

On one of the first warm spring days, old Jacob Frant, leaning on his staff and solacing himself with a pipe, stood looking over his garden gate. There was a west wind, and every bud and blossom was coming out to meet it. Jacob's garden was verdant with young leaves and shoots; the scent of hyacinths was strong, for the bed behind him blazed with them. Polly and several of her children stood also at the door of their cottage; they were looking down the field as though they hoped shortly to see someone come down the slope from the house and ascend their field toward them. It was a Sunday afternoon, and they were all dressed in their best. Her boy, who as a baby had hit Sarah with the rattle, stood, a tall lad, beside his mother.

"He's a handsome man is the new master, and Susan says he is powerful fond of our missy. I'm glad she's took a partner at last; such a lot of Frants and only one of the old family do seem all wrong, somehow."

"They're coming, I think. The arches of green was beautiful, wasn't they, mother? A good job it didn't rain yesterday. Miss Sarah said they should stop up all this week."

"Look, children!" admonished his mother sharply. "Who will see them first? I wonder if father sees them," she added, glancing across to the next garden. "How he do mutter to himself nowadays, to be sure!"

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness," he was saying. "'She considereth a field, and buyeth it. . . Strength and honor are her clothing.' A good maid, a very wise maid is Sarah. She has not chosen a mate who will want to muzzle the ox as

he treads out the corn. And I could see he had some time or other had his seven lean years, which we all need, when she brought him for me to see."

Presently the figures of a man and a woman were seen making their way up the field through the long grass and buttercups. Jacob suddenly straightened his bent figure, and raising his hand cried aloud in his slow, impressive voice :

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved . . . fair as the moon, clear as the sun?"

"Father, father!" shouted his daughter in his ear. "What are you talking about? Here comes Miss Sarah and her husband."

"Ay," he answered, "that is just what I was saying. You always think I can't see, just because I'm a trifle hard of hearing."

"Jacob, dear Jacob," cried Sarah's clear tones, "did you think I should not come and see you the very first day? My husband drove me to church on the coach this morning, and we only got home last night, you know."

The old man laid the gnarled fingers of one hand on her arm, and with the other he touched Mr. Hay.

"A good husband is known by his wife's countenance," he said, then looked searchingly from one to the other. "Thy children shall rise up and call thee blessed; thy husband shall praise thee, Sarah. But 'tis main cool standing here, although it is the time of the singing o' birds. Come in and sit down and bide with me a bit by the fire and let me have a look at you both and hear about that foreign place o' yours, where you've been for your honeymoon."

THE END.

